PRIVATE EYE

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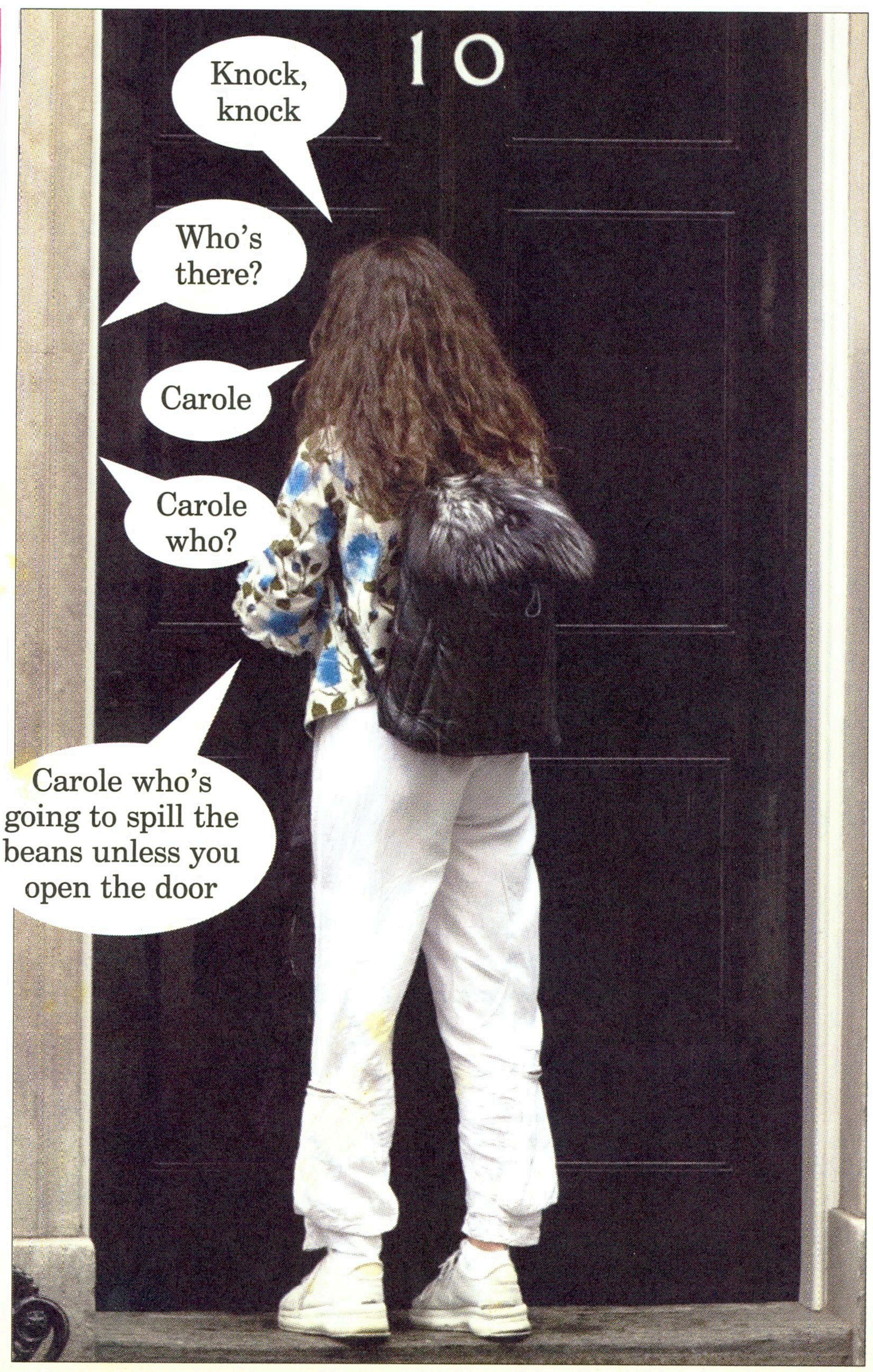
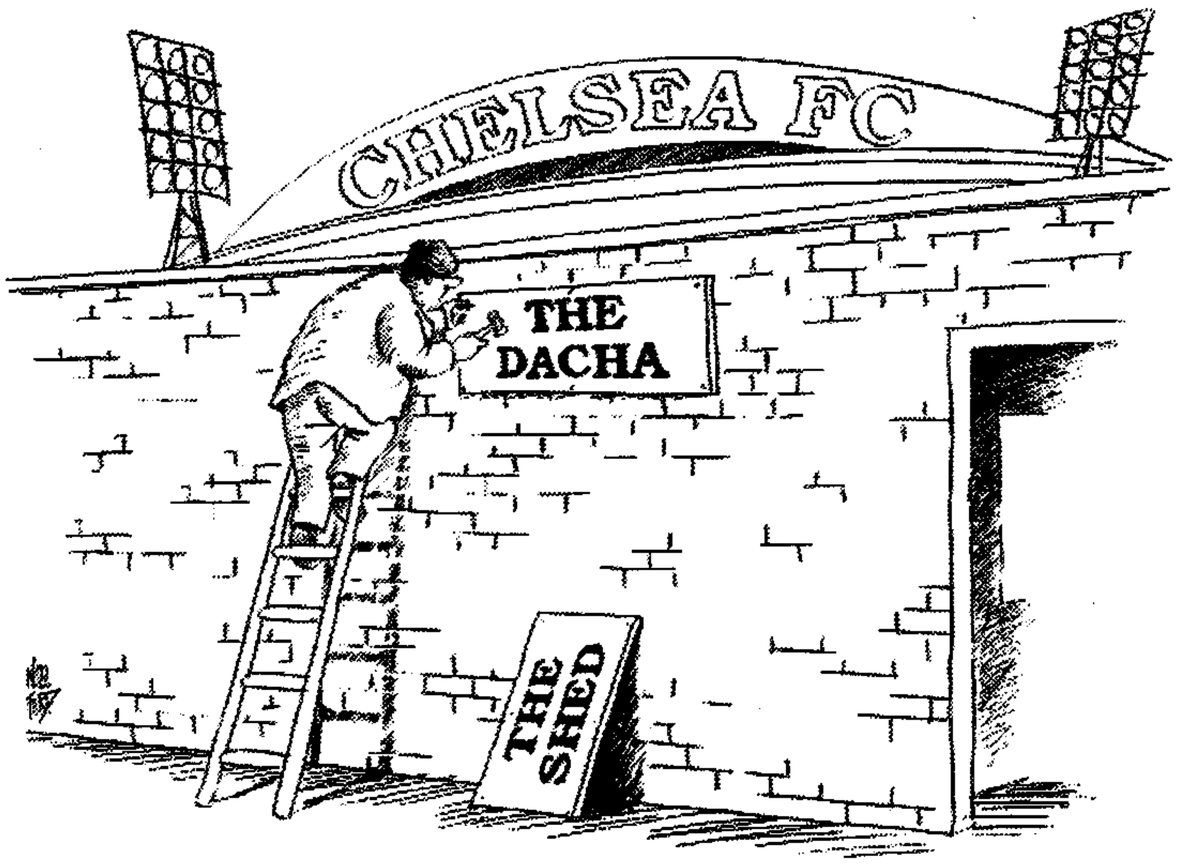
CAPLIN CHERIE SHOCK



Witan...



wisdom

We remember when Accrington Stanley... oh, well, never mind.
Suffice to say we've seen it all before and know that simply
throwing money at things isn't always the best investment.
Calling Witan, however, may well be a good move.

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Gnome

I AM glad to announce that the Gnome organisation has reached a settlement of its long-running legal dispute with Mr Dirty Desmond, the proprietor of the Daily Sexpress.

Lord Gnome fully accepts that his description of Mr Desmond as "a seedy little porn merchant, peddling his filthy wares in rat-infested sewers" could have been taken to imply that Mr Desmond was not a suitable proprietor of a national newspaper.

In the light of a hand-delivered letter I received last week, carrying the message "You're dog meat, Gnomey", accompanied by a set of photographs of a personal nature, I am happy to retract my unfortunate remarks and to pay a large sum of money to a charity of Mr Desmond's choice, namely The Hostel For Asian Readers' Wives With Big 'Uns.

Lord Gnome
The Daily Gnomegraph
Wapping BigUns
Canary Phwarf
EC1.

"You'll need one of these to protect yourself from the lunatics we sell weapons to"

Le prince Charles et Camilla Parker Bowels à une soirée de gala sur Shakespeare à Londres

Photo caption, Var-Matin (Toulouse)

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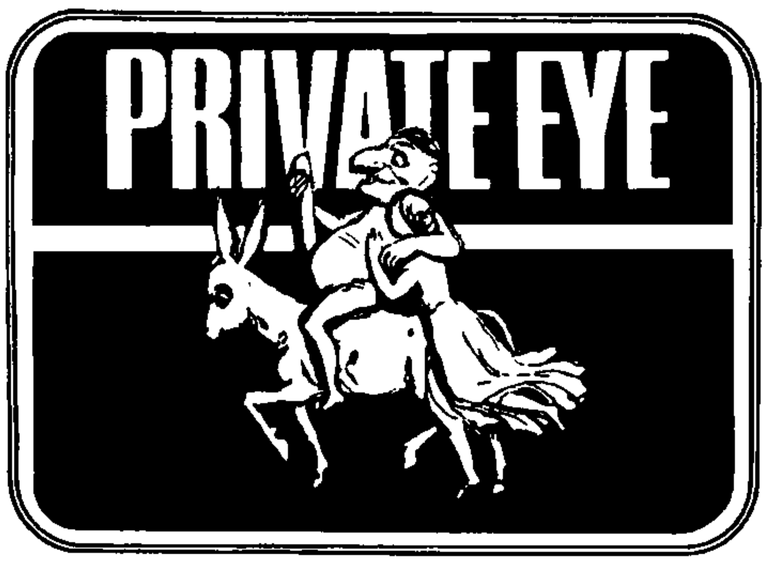

Lifestyle guru!

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PANIC at the treasury about the tax avoidance group litigation orders (GLOs), exposed in the last *Eye*, and the billions that could be lost to the UK exchequer, did not take long to surface.

On 8 September paymaster-general "Red" Dawn Primarolo slapped a six-year time limit on companies who claim back tax they allege has been unlawfully raised. This move was aimed at the firms joining the GLOs. At once the vast tax avoidance industry hit back. Peter Cussons, tax avoidance specialist at PriceWaterhouseCoopers, said Red Dawn's plan might be illegal; and Mark White, of Klegal (KPMG's legal advisers and tax avoidance specialists), said it might be a grave breach of human rights – presumably the inalienable human right to avoid tax.

Whether or not Red Dawn gets away with her attempt to fix a time limit on this loophole, the companies who have already registered on the dodgers' GLOs will escape her grasp. But who are they?

Considerable effort has been made to keep their names secret. The *Eye*'s inquiries to Dorsey and Whitney, the City solicitors who hold the registers of applicant companies, were either ignored or rebuffed; so the *Eye* resorted to its own lawyers to tease out the information.

The companies that have joined the order to dodge tax under the CFC and EU dividend heading, we can now reveal, are Anglo-American plc and six associated companies; the Tarmac group (three companies); the Invensys Group, including the BTR group (ten companies) and Siba Luxembourg; Sainsburys (five); Royal Sun Alliance (eight); the Prudential Assurance Co; Axa Sun Life (six) and, last but not least, the vast empire of "new" Labour favourite and adviser Lord Hollick, United Business Media (32 companies).

Under the second head, the so-called "thin cap litigation order", the companies are Caterpillar (including the Perkins group and 32 other companies); Pepsico (13); Volkswagon (8); Compagne Plastic Omnium of Lyons, including Raydel of Basildon; IBM (five); the Musgrave group of Ireland (five); Volvo (three); and Siemens (five). In other words, the firms that have already registered are among the richest and most powerful in the land, if not the world.

THE murder of Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindh prompted the miraculous appearance of Labour's Europe minister Denis MacShane on the *Today* programme minutes after her death had been announced.

"Anna was a great friend of both Tony Blair and Jack Straw," he warbled in a transparent attempt to claim Lindh for "new" Labour and the Third Way. In fact Anna Lindh, though a strong advocate of the single currency, was – unlike Tony Blair and Jack Straw – a bitter opponent of their support for President Bush's war on Iraq. Days before her death Lindh had written to her old friend Professor Ken Coates, chairman of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. In her letter she informed Coates of her campaign – and of her government's subsequent decision to appoint weapons inspector Hans Blix to a new, independent international commission designed to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction.

PS: Coates used to be a Labour MEP until he was flung out for not being sufficiently loyal – a mistake unlikely to be repeated by Denis MacShane!

WITH Peter Mandelson back in Tony Blair's campaign team, can the Hinduja brothers be far behind?

Older readers will recall that the last time Mandy resigned from the cabinet it was over accusations that he had backed passport applications from the Hinduja brothers, who also happened to be donors to the dreaded millennium dome.

Now Mandy has returned to guide his master's PR effort, its just like the good old days again. His most recent formal engagement was addressing 500 distinguished guests at July's Labour Friends of India banquet at the Portman Hotel in London. Prominent there were SP and GP Hinduja.

Their attendance was reported in the Indian press. But when asked to confirm it and to say whether the Hindujas had funded the event as they have in the past, Labour Friends of India director Vikas Pota refused to comment, saying all public statements about the group must come from its chairman, Stephen Pound MP. Pound failed to return any calls on the matter.

The brothers' enthusiasm for British passports may be related to the fact that they are currently being prosecuted in India for alleged corruption in an arms deal. (It is claimed that the Swedish arms firm Bofors sold howitzers to the Indian government in the 1980s after allegedly giving $8m to the Hindujas to ease the deal.)

One week after they went to the Labour Friends of India Banquet, the Indian supreme court ruled that the brothers still have to face trial over allegations of criminal conspiracy, cheating and bribery. The court overruled a previous judgment by New Delhi's high court which had stopped the prosecution, a move described by the judges as "self-contradictory and confusing".

India's Central Bureau of Investigation insists the brothers stay in India during the trial and the supreme court expects them back on 15 October.

Press reports suggest Bofors defence against the charges is not particularly helpful to the brothers. Rather than deny hiring the Hindujas, Bofors has told the court that there was no regulation stopping it from hiring middlemen. Bofors' lawyer said that hiring middlemen was merely a "breach of an agreement" not "cheating".

Meanwhile, Mandy's banquet lecture, delivered with some 20 Labour MPs in the audience, was completely in tune with government policy. He paid tribute to Indian prime minister Atal Vajpayee, who sent a personal message to the event, for his "vision" and "wisdom".

Vajpayee, of the Hindu extremist BJP party, showed that wisdom soon after by buying £1bn worth of BAE Hawk aeroplanes. He also showed his commitment to limiting the spread of weapons of mass destruction by deciding to build at least 30 "Prithvi" missiles, which can carry India's new atomic warheads all the way to their nuclear neighbour, Pakistan.

THE *Eye*'s favourite football agent, Paul Stretford of Proactive, is under attack again, this time from Steve Gibson, chairman of Middlesbrough FC.

Gibson claims he bid £5.35m for Fulham's young midfield player Steve Davis and hoped to clinch the deal until Stretford demanded £700,000 to "facilitate" it. The deal was called of and Davis is still at Fulham.

Kevin Keegan, meanwhile, manager of Manchester City, has sold his shares in Proactive.

NEWS

LAST week's decision to pull the plug on legal aid for more than 1,000 families who claim their children were damaged by the MMR vaccine appears perverse and serves no public interest. Indeed, the court case everyone hopes will settle the controversy is now only six months away; and crucial tests and experiments on the children are continuing.

So far the case has cost taxpayers about £10m – about £10,000 for each child – a pittance compared to the huge sums available to the three defendant drug companies. Yet the MMR case is vital not only to the families involved, some of whose children have died and others who are severely disabled; but to all parents who are bewildered about whether the vaccines they are giving their healthy children are safe. The case is also vital because of the ongoing research into the causes of what is described as an autism "epidemic".

Because of previous health scandals, people no longer trust the government and its allies in the powerful drug companies who between them control information and most research. With MMR, many people are angry that they have been denied a choice of vaccine and have either sought costly single jabs or left their children unvaccinated (which helps no one). They too need an independent judgment on the safety of the jab.

If the drug companies win in the courts next year, research could then focus on other potential causes and treatments for the victims. The government, moreover, would have independent backing for its claims that MMR is the "safest way to protect your child" – and the parents involved could stop blaming themselves for indirectly damaging their previously healthy child.

Instead, the decision by the legal services commission to dump the families now will only confirm their view that the combined Goliath powers of government and drug companies are working against them.

Ever since they first voiced concerns that their children's often catastrophic plight might have been the rare result of vaccination, these parents have been shunned and accused of "scare-mongering" and being "anti-vaccine". They have seen doctors and scientists who treat their children and share their concerns, notably Dr Andrew Wakefield, being accused of junk science and losing their research grants and jobs. These "scare-mongerers" are coping often with little financial and physical help with sick and often very challenging children – children who, when their parents can no longer cope, are heading towards an isolated adulthood dependent on the state.

These families want to know what, if not MMR, is a trigger. Lawyers acting for them are to appeal the LSC's decision on 30 September. But to stop the action now would serve no use - not even to the defendant drug companies. The controversy will not go away, it will grow.

If the parents are to lose, they want to lose in court or in a Hutton-style public inquiry with everything out in the open and not, as one parent said to the *Eye*, "by the powers that be taking away David's catapult."

Number crunching

£400,000

■ amount government pledged to improve HIV prevention last week

■ amount government spent to host DSEi weapons convention last week

Street Of Shame

WHILE J-Lo and Ben Affleck went their separate ways, two other celeb pin-ups decided to kiss and make up. Yes, Conrad "Lord" Black and Richard "Dirty" Desmond (for it was they) issued a heart-warming statement on Monday, published simultaneously in the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Express*, revealing that they are now an item – and "to underline the restoration of goodwill between the two groups, they have agreed to make a joint donation to an agreed charity".

As further proof, they've stopped suing each other. Conrad has dropped a libel suit against the *Sunday Express* over comments on his alleged debts (though Desmond will pay some of his costs). In return Dirty Des and four of his co-directors will abandon an action against Black. As Monday's statement rather coyly puts it: "On 24 December 2002 the *Daily Telegraph* reported a comment by Lord Black that the *Sunday Express* was published by a company partially directed by disreputable people. Lord Black expresses his regret for this comment and is happy to withdraw it."

Disreputable people, eh? This is what Black actually said about the *Express* in that 24 December article: "I don't think serious people pay much attention to a newspaper that has lost more than 80 percent of its historic readership and is circling the drain. It is published by a mutant smut and defamation company, run by a pornographer and a couple of ex-convicts. These people would have trouble raising £10 from any capital market. Merry Christmas to you, Richard Desmond."

No wonder the blustering baron had to sue for peace: it would be hard to imagine a more unjustifiable slur on Desmond and his entourage. Why, it is now several years since he employed as his company secretary someone who had just served a lengthy jail sentence for threatening a man with a loaded, sawn-off shotgun!

FRUSTRATION is growing at the *Mail on Sunday* where two long-term investments are failing to pay dividends.

Sick of sending ghost writers on wild goose chases around the pubs of south-east England in search of "star" columnist George Best, only to find his best quotes turning up in every other paper, execs on the paper's *Night and Day* magazine arranged an exclusive photo shoot with Best and his wife to publicise their touching reconciliation last week.

Unfortunately by the time publication day had rolled around, the pair had split up again, a "secret mistress" had popped up in the *News of the World* to confess to a lengthy affair with the ex-soccer star, and all Best was prepared to do was slag off the wife he was pictured cuddling.

Undeterred, the paper printed the lot along with a text by Best accusing the woman he was pictured cosying up to as an hysterical, violent drunkard.

But if Best is a less than ideal employee, that's nothing compared to the magazine's most controversial columnist, Carole Caplin. Recruited by *Night and Day* editor Christena Appleyard back in February on the promise of spectacular revelations about life with the Blairs, Caplin has failed to come up with the goods. Appleyard, however, lives in hope, and last Sunday she devoted vast acres of her magazine – and the cover – to la Caplin to detail how dark forces at the heart of government had pushed the guru to "a state of near-breakdown". The story ended with tantalising hints about "the next part of her survival strategy… it wouldn't be appropriate to reveal more at the moment."

Unfortunately for Appleyard, it appears to involve going elsewhere. Flushed by the coverage that the *Night and Day* piece generated, Caplin's PR man Ian Monk spent the next day touting a "behind closed doors memoir about life at Downing Street and Chequers" around anyone who was interested. So much for employee loyalty!

GOOGLE – don'tcha love it? The *Guardian* certainly does. Last month the *Eye* drew attention to the blizzard of recent puff-pieces – most of which, in the newspaper's online version, appeared alongside a "Google Keyword Advertising" logo leading to a page announcing that "Google advertising delivers results".

And still the results keep coming. Last Tuesday the love-in spread to the leader column, with an advertorial (whoops, sorry, "editorial") headed "Google the Big Engine". As the awestruck leader-writer observed: "Google, the Internet search engine, five years old this week, is no ordinary company… Google is not only one of the wonders of the web, but has also become both a noun and a verb. Oh, and it makes good profits…"

Which, of course, means lots of lovely lolly to spend on yet more adverts in the *Grauniad*. Trebles all round!

DOES Andrew Neill wish to be known as Lavish McTavish? It looked like it when his pisspoor *Scotsman* newspaper launched its massive new TV advertising campaign a couple of weeks ago with a slap-up dinner for media bigwigs.

Alas! The next day editor Iain Martin sent a memo to executives ordering an urgent crackdown on expenses: "Staff should be encouraged to meet contacts, whenever possible, over a drink or coffee rather than lunch and dinner.

Why the panic? As Martin shamefacedly admitted, only hours after his banquet, "we have, in effect, spent the entertaining budget for this year already."

Meanwhile, if the large puffs in "Brillo Pad's" *The Business* are to be believed, the rag is going from strength to strength – "Europe's fastest-growing global business newspaper… a formidable force in the global newspaper market". And quality advertisers are flocking from afar to get into this mighty organ.

Like Ritz Fine Jewellery, for example, which took a prominent ad on page 2 last week just below yet another of Brillo's hysterical self-promoting fanfares. Yes, the same Ritz Fine Jewellery that happens to be owned by the paper's enigmatic proprietors, the Barclay brothers. But surely they paid full price for the slot, didn't they?

REBEKAH WADE, editor of the *Sun*, took time off from her ceaseless hunt for paedophiles and pervs on 11 September to note the arrival of a new stunna on the social scene.

Half a page was devoted to a picture of Peaches Geldof, daughter of Bob and the late Paula Yates, wearing a miniskirt and crop top, beneath the headline "Geldof junior a real Peach". The accompanying text noted that she is 14 – but, as it quite reasonably pointed out, "an onlooker said: 'she looked much older'."

"Look, I'll get my people to get in touch with your people..."

JUST FANCY THAT!

"David Blaine must be feeling rather ill. Not because he's starving himself for 44 days while cooped up in a glass box, but because this pointless stunt is being greeted with such derision. There are 800 million people starving in the world today through no fault of their own. Perhaps this horrifying statistic will give this po-faced magic man some real food for thought when he comes down to earth."

— Editorial in *Sunday Mirror*, 14 September, p.14

"Here's a really magical offer for you. Showman David Blaine is suspended in a glass box by the Thames on his 44-day endurance feat. And to mark this incredible event, you can get the fantastic Channel 4 DVD *David Blaine: Showman*..."

— *Sunday Mirror* special offer, 14 September, p.18

THE *Mirror*'s editorial on 12 September attacked the Jockey Club for banning the use of mobile phones.

"Racing is threatened as jockeys contemplate strike action, which shows how harshly they feel they are being treated," the paper thundered. "The Jockey Club must back down and withdraw this senseless ban."

Since the story was already 10 days old, what prompted the paper's continued ire? Could it by any chance be related to the fact that the riders who are opposing the ban are represented by Martin Cruddace, ex-legal supremo at the *Daily Mirror*, and a co-owner of racehorse Ledham with editor Piers "Moron" Morgan?

Already an icon of beauty and fashion, Zara [Phillips] is imbued with enormous equestrian talent.

LUCINDA GREEN
Daily Telegraph

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

SILVIO Berlusconi may have taken every possible opportunity to put his foot in it when being interviewed by the *Spectator*, but he was not alone.

Boris Johnson, the magazine's editor, penned the following ringing defence of Mussolini's biggest fan in the magazine's 6 September issue: "Only last week the Swedish foreign minister, Anna Lindh, anathematised not just Berlusconi, but Italy itself... You may find, like me, that at the sight of Berlusconi being monstered by Anna Lindh, your sword instinctively flies from its scabbard in his defence."

Just four days later, Lindh was fatally stabbed in a Stockholm department store.

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Renault, and I don't want to see this appearing in *Private Eye*, is the new Citroën." — Jeremy Clarkson, *Sunday Times*.

"September is the new January." — *Guardian*.

"Is Monday the new Friday?" — *New York Times*.

"Thursday is now 'the new Friday'." — Suzi Godson, *Independent on Sunday*.

"Are Don'ts the new Dos?" — *Glamour* magazine.

HACKWATCH

Nick Rufford

IT ISN'T only ministers and their advisers who await Lord Hutton's findings with some trepidation. Bosses at Wapping fear the report may include damning criticism of *Sunday Times* hack Nick Rufford.

Janice Kelly told the inquiry that she and her husband were in the front garden when Rufford turned up at their house on 9 July, the day before Dr Kelly was named as Andrew Gilligan's source. "He said that [Rupert] Murdoch had offered hotel accommodation for both of us away from the media spotlight in return for an article by David." Dr Kelly declined the offer, and explained that he had been told by the ministry of defence not to speak to the press. Rufford left a couple of minutes later.

According to Mrs Kelly, her husband was extremely upset and alarmed. "He got the impression from Nick that the gloves were off now, that Nick would use David's name in any article that he wrote." Sure enough, four days later Rufford wrote a news story quoting Kelly. "The article gave the impression that Nick had had a full blown interview with David at our home in Oxfordshire," Janice Kelly told the inquiry. "That was not the case. And he said something like: Thanks Nick, the MoD will think I have been talking to the press after I expressly said that I would not. That was in no way an interview that he gave. But Nick gave the impression that it was." Other newspaper coverage disturbed him as well, but "the thing he was worried about was the Nick Rufford article... He was angry and upset".

Kelly killed himself five days later. The following weekend Rufford wrote a feature recalling conversations over the years with his "friend" David Kelly. "To interview him on the record, he would request that you ask the foreign office press office, which invariably declined. But once in a while he didn't mind being quoted if you told him you needed a named source for the story. 'Just don't get me into trouble,' he would say. He told me just before he died that he had been speaking to the press for 10 years and had never had a bad experience. 'If someone abuses your trust you just don't deal with them again,' he said." Yet, with remarkable chutzpah, Rufford also wrote a front-page splash in the same day's paper presenting their brief conversation in the front garden as "his last interview before he died". Rufford added that "his sense of betrayal was palpable and he felt profoundly let down by the MoD".

Not only the MoD, as we now know. The embarrassment at Wapping can be gauged from the fact that the *Times*'s otherwise exhaustive account of Mrs Kelly's testimony omitted all her strictures on Rufford, and made no mention of her husband's distress at being stitched up by the *Sunday Times* hack.

Lord Hutton might be interested to learn that Rufford has some experience of sexing up stories. In November 1994, soon after arriving in Hong Kong as the *Sunday Times*'s Far East correspondent, he conned his way into one of governor Chris Patten's residences, Fanling Lodge, by pretending to work for Prince Charles, who was due to arrive shortly on a five-day visit. He then swam in the pool and entered one of the bedrooms before being arrested.

The purpose of this tabloid-style stunt was to give the *Sunday Times* a shock-horror scoop exposing lax security, but it exposed nothing of the sort: Rufford's intrusion occurred *before* the prince's advance party of special security men were scheduled to be in place. By the time Prince Charles turned up, the house would be fully protected. "Any suggestion that this prank was justified by concerns about the Prince of Wales's security is, of course, wholly spurious," Chris Patten commented. "It is an incident which has inevitably caused a great deal of extra work for the police. I just hope that those who gave the thumbs up to this enterprise will be able to justify the extra costs that it has involved to the Hong Kong taxpayers."

Rufford has since come back to haunt Patten by making regular forays to Brussels, where he dishes out business cards describing himself as "European editor" of the *Sunday Times*, though no one at Wapping seems aware of such a title. He has acquired a *pied à terre* in the city, where his desperation to secure Euro-nonsense stories such as "Smoky Bacon Crisps to Face EU Ban" – aided and abetted by his friend Chris Heaton-Harris, a Conservative MEP – recently extended to installing a young Tory press officer as a flatmate.

In one of his articles after Dr Kelly's death, Rufford recalled how "he teased me, saying I had wasted my doctorate in engineering by becoming a journalist. 'You could switch careers and become a UN inspector,' he told me. 'It is not too late. Make up for all those years you squandered'." The wretched hack may indeed be looking for a new job soon – though it seems unlikely Kelly's old colleagues in the inspection teams would want to have him. Still, perhaps there's a vacancy for a reporter of such dubious talents at the *News of the Screws*.

IT'S just over a year since the mass exodus of staff at the *Big Issue* magazine through redundancies which cut the editorial team by more than half.

The promised closer partnership with *The Big Issue in the North* – widely mooted in the press by *Big Issue* founder and proprietor John Bird last summer – never materialised, thanks to disagreements between the two separate organisations. This leaves a tiny rump of staff in the London office valiantly struggling to carry on publishing. Even loyal freelancers are becoming weary and unwilling, as some haven't been paid for work done up to a year ago.

Financial controller Ian McArthur tried to pass the buck for this failure to other departments, suggesting editors were sitting on freelance invoices. Yet the truth is that editors are constantly pleading with the finance department to pay the writers, subs, designers and other freelancers the magazine has depended on heavily since the redundancies.

Given all this, the company's 2002 accounts, now filed with Companies House, make interesting reading. While making huge staff cuts to save cash, the directors were paying themselves more than £180,000 – a 20 percent rise on the previous year's £150,000 directors' salary bill and more than 10 percent of the entire company's salary bill (even before staff cuts). This despite the fact that their remaining employees were suffering a pay freeze.

Earlier this month Bird was showing his usual loyalty to his staff by sneering on Radio 4's *The Message* that they were the same "white middle class liberals" as the rest of the media.

"These celebrities we chased around all day, they lead really useless lives!"

KEN Livingstone has been making himself indispensable to "new" Labour's floundering campaign to hold the Brent East constituency – which as the *Eye* went to press still had a Labour majority of more than 13,000.

Local activists had argued strongly that an early by-election might allow the Liberal Democrats in, so strong was local opposition to the Iraq war in this ethnically diverse part of London, once represented in parliament by, er, Ken Leninspart. Not surprisingly they were ignored and insult was added to injury by the exclusion of local left-wing Unison official Dorothy Macedo (*Eyes passim*) from the candidates' shortlist.

The comrades faced a choice of hardcore Blairistas and the reasonably safe Robert Evans, currently a London MEP. Evans made much of his heroic stand against the Iraq war in the European parliament – a stand that appeared to have escaped many of his erstwhile colleagues – but Leninspart tried hard to hold back the tide of anti-government sentiment. All of which should stand him in good stead for early readmittance to the party – although others such as John Prescott, party chairman Ian McCartney and general-secretary Dave "Spart" Triesman will have some explaining to do if and when Ken returns. Last year they argued strenuously that there was no way he could be readmitted until he had served his five-year ban "in full".

LONDON mayor Ken Livingstone's recent reception at City Hall for the mayor of Dhaka, Sadeque Hossain Khoka, to celebrate the signing of the "London-Dhaka Friendship Agreement", raised eyebrows in some quarters.

Khoka represents the far-right Bangladesh Nationalist Party and has a local reputation as something of a thug. All was no doubt forgiven, however, when the helpful Khoka told London's large Bangladeshi community to "Vote Ken" in the mayoral elections.

Red Ken himself, meanwhile, has finally bowed to pressure from unhappy lefties and trade unionists and stopped using Northcliffe Newspapers to print his London-wide freebie magazine, the *Londoner*.

The next three editions, each of which will feature a fascinating read about What Ken Did, will now be printed by Westferry Printers, jointly owned by the Express and Telegraph groups, in a contract worth £96,000. His radical chums will now doubt be delighted!

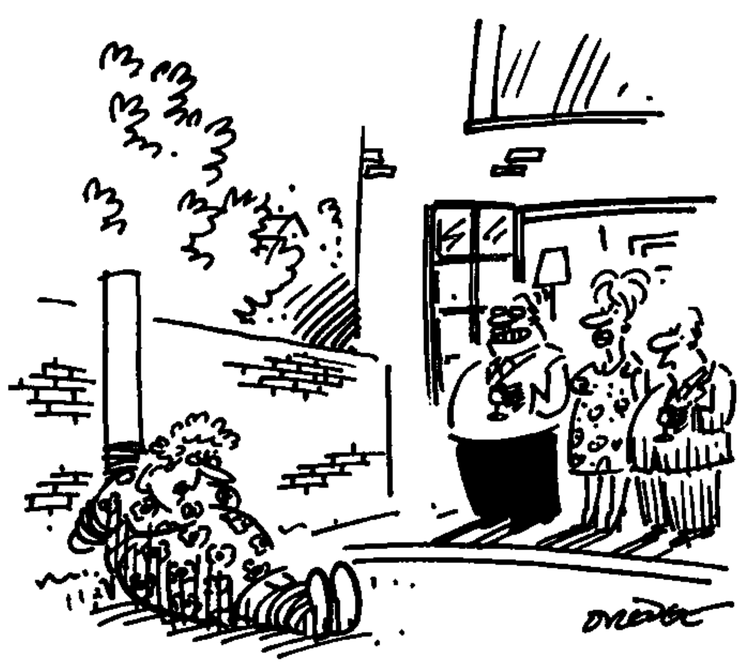
DAVE HILL's return as Tony Blair's communications director from Chime Communications, the PR firm run by Lord Bell, brings some business contracts right back into Number 10.

Hill's high profile lobbying for Monsanto at Chime was well reported, but his corporate connections do not stop there. His position at Number 10 suggests we could get more government by… Tesco.

The supermarket giant is a client of Good Relations, the Chime subsidiary led by Hill. Already Tesco's irritating "computers for schools" promotion, whereby parents spend millions at the supermarket in return for the odd bit of kit for their kids, was run by the PR firm; and Blair himself launched the scheme in 2001 under the auspices of Hill's "political public relations team" at Good Relations. Under Hill's lead Tesco also contributed to the Millennium Dome. Promised crackdowns on anti-competitive practices by supermarkets mysteriously evaporated in this period.

Hill's firm also represented BP and pushed Securicor's electronic tagging scheme, although these two causes hardly need extra support in Downing Street.

The Tory-run Chime retains lots of Labour contacts. Good Relations staff include James O'Keefe, a one-time assistant to David Blunkett and Westminster Labour councillor Paul Dimoldenberg. Another subsidiary of the firm, Bell Pottinger Public Affairs, has former Jack Straw and Chris Smith assistant Liam McCloy on the staff. He is joined by former Jack Cunningham assistant Tim Walker, ever-hopeful Labour candidate Howard Dawber and Jennifer Gerber, who joined this year from Labour HQ, where she worked in the press office and Labour's "business liaison unit".



"We just couldn't live with ourselves if we put mother in a home..."

WHO PAYS THE PIPER?

THE timetable for Labour's conference shows that business is still deeply in love with the party.

All the conference fringe meetings of the Foreign Policy Centre, a think tank whose patron is Tony Blair, are sponsored by that lovable firm, **Nestlé**. Foreign secretary Jack Straw, development minister Hilary Benn and Peter Hain (as well as Blair's favourite intellectual, Antony Giddens) will all speak from platforms funded by the chocolate maker so often accused of selling unsuitable baby milk in the third world.

The money men are well represented at conference too. Labour think tank the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), whose Matthew Taylor just became Blair's head of policy, has a conference meeting on disability with employment minister Andrew Smith and health minister Rosie Winterton. The event is sponsored by **Unum Provident**, whose UK corporate director, Joanne Hindle, will speak alongside the ministers.

In case you've never heard of Unum Provident, it is an enormous US multinational that specialises in offering disability and illness insurance. Hence it has a direct financial interest in cutbacks in state sickness and disability benefits. This March it was fined $1m in Georgia following a government investigation into its refusal to pay out to sick policyholders.

As well as the Georgia fine, Unum faces some nine "class action" cases from angry policyholders.

Peter Mandelson, meanwhile, will speak about whether "Labour can bridge the inequality gap" at a Social Market Foundation (SMF) fringe meeting sponsored by **Barclays Bank**. Barclays executive Martin Mosley will join Mandy on stage.

The treasury select committee recently investigated the outrageous interest rates charged by some store cards, and Labour is obviously taking the issue seriously. Consumer affairs minister Gerry Sutcliffe is speaking for the SMF on consumer debt at a meeting sponsored by… the **Finance & Leasing Association**, a trade body representing the store card, credit card, car loan and personal credit industry.

Gary Titley, Labour leader in the European parliament, meanwhile, is speaking on a Foreign Policy Centre meeting paid for by **Provident Financial** – a specialist in "sub prime" loans. They lend to poor people turned down by other banks at rates of interest that touch 177% APR. The department of trade, alarmed by exorbitant interest rates for the poor, is looking at capping interest rates in "sub prime" lending, so the firm needs all the friends it can get. GMB leader Kevin Curran, whose own members must be among some of those paying the Provy's interest rates, will join Titley.

The **mobile phone firms** are also sticking their oar in. Environment minister Alun Michael will pronounce on how planning decisions can be speeded at an SMF meeting sponsored by the **Mobile Operators Association**, a lobby group keen to get mobile phone masts installed against local opposition. Mike Dolan, director of the Mobile Operators Association, is also scheduled to speak. Meanwhile phone operator "**3m**" are paying for a Social Market Foundation disco hosted by schools minister Stephen Twigg, with an appearance from leftwing troubadour Billy Bragg.

UPS, the American parcel firm which wants the Post Office privatised, funds the event too. Twigg is also discussing education funding for IPPR, sponsored by **WH Smith** – a firm desperate to market to children through one of those mock-worthy "help your school" schemes.

The **train operators**, presuming they travel by car, are also scheduled to arrive in Bournemouth. Transport secretary Alistair Darling and David Begg, chair of Labour's Commission for Integrated Transport, are talking about Labour's "10 year transport plan" (what plan?) for the SMF on a platform paid for by train firm the **Go-Ahead Group**, operator of the miserable Thameslink franchise.

Chris Moyes, the £329,000-a-year Go-Ahead Group boss, will also speak. And Begg and transport minister Tony McNulty are speaking on "the next stop for transport" for the IPPR in a meeting sponsored by **Arriva**. This firm was fined £2m for poor service, but received a £121m government subsidy. Last year Arriva lost its trans-Pennine service after a year of cancelled trains and strike action by low-paid conductors.

The NHS attracts business interest too. Health minister Rosie Winterton will be "taking the pulse of the NHS" at an SMF meeting sponsored by **BUPA**. Meanwhile think tank Demos is having a meeting to discuss "democratising health" at conference. Only the invited can discuss democracy, however, as this is a "private breakfast seminar" promising "senior individuals" from government. The event is paid for by **Superdrug**.

Finally, culture minister Tessa Jowell has a knack for finding the right sponsor. On conference Monday she will speak about the "Charter Review and the future of television" at an SMF meeting paid for by **Sky TV**, alongside Sky managing director Dawn Airey. No BBC representative is present. The next day she will discuss whether the lottery is working properly on a platform paid for by **Camelot**, alongside the firm's chief executive Diane Thompson. You couldn't make it up!

THE SPROUT

THE European parliament's governing body, the conference of presidents, was the scene of a serious tussle on 4 September over the Eurostat fraud case (*Eyes passim*).

Before the summer it was agreed that European commission president Romano Prodi would take the stand to defend the commission against a string of cover-up allegations, delaying action and claims that it ignored evidence of massive fraud in Europe's statistics agency. At the time of the last *Sprout* going to press, it was agreed that Prodi would have to appear before the appropriate MEPs' budgetary control committee under the chairmanship of MEP Diemut Theato.

But what was supposed to be a serious fraud inquiry – allowing MEPs to cross-examine Prodi et al – has degenerated into a political power struggle. The parliament's socialist group leader noticed that the three commissioners in the firing line – Neil Kinnock, Dr Pedro Sobles Mira and Dr Michaele Scheyer – are all, er, socialists (or green). Enrique Baron Crespo then announced that unleashing MEPs from the budget committee on this buck-passing troika was a right-wing plot and he was prepared to ignore the massive fraud to defend his pals.

Hans-Gert Peottering, leader of the centre-right EPP group (with which UK Tory MEPs are aligned), soon realised there were votes in this Eurostat thingy and demanded blood. Enter Pat Cox, the genial Oirish ex-TV star and now the MEPs' MEP, who saw his chance for press coverage and announced in the private meeting that the issue was too important for the appropriate MEP committee and should be discussed by the conference of presidents. This august body, comprised of the political party leaders, delighted to take the credit for any action that might come about and supported him.

Theato fought back, demanding that she should co-chair the meeting with Cox and that the meeting should be held in public. No way, said Cox. Thus the most important meeting over the biggest fraud case to erupt in Europe since the commission was forced to resign in 1999 will be run for the political benefit of those who refused to act, leaving taxpayer proles in the dark as British MEPs will not even be allowed to question the accused.

● The above article is compiled by *The Sprout* magazine, available in the UK by calling 0870 241 8832 or through www.thesprout.net.

LEGAL NEWS

AS THE Hutton inquiry thunders towards a close just two months after Dr David Kelly's death, court watchers are asking some difficult questions about the Saville inquiry into Bloody Sunday, now limping through its fifth year.

Established way back in January 1998, Lord Saville's marathon shows no sign of an imminent end. Latest estimations are for sometime in autumn 2005, though the judicial reviews which will inevitably follow from the publication of Saville's findings will drag things on for years to come. The only certainty is that the latest official projected bill – £120m – will be exceeded.

While Hutton sweated away in the royal courts of justice throughout the summer, the Saville inquiry was adjourned from 10 July to 8 September. This followed three-week breaks last Christmas and Easter, and a full ten days in March to allow celebrations for St Patrick's day (rather than the customary 24-hour period). Previous vacations have been followed by two judges sitting alongside Saville, as well as assorted lawyers and barristers tendering their resignations due to the tribunal's unanticipated length.

Another interesting contrast between the two inquiries is the way in which information has been made available to the public. While Hutton simply instructed a team from the department of constitutional affairs to put every transcript, memo, email, note and piece of evidence online – and, as a result, created the most popular political website in the country – Saville brought in management consultants Deloitte and Touche to invite tenders from other private companies to set up a website at a cost of many millions of pounds. While it features thousands of transcripts of the hearings, not a single document is available.

THE forthcoming inquest into the deaths of Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed will be presided over by Surrey coroner, Michael Burgess.

Mr Burgess is one of the few people left in the southern counties who still entertains the belief that the four young people shot dead at Aldershot's Deep Cut barracks since 1995 may have committed suicide.

His most celebrated suicide verdict was at the inquest of Sean Benton, who was shot five times in the chest. Frank Swann, the ballistics expert hired by the families bereaved at Deep Cut, reckons that if the young soldier shot himself, his arms had to be 15ft long.

NORTHERN Ireland minister John Spellar has found it difficult to give up the habit of a lifetime: interfering in the internal affairs of the Amicus manufacturing and engineering union.

A former protégé of right-wing electricians boss Eric Hammond, Spellar continued to keep an office at the union's baronial HQ in Bromley long after the EEPTU merged with the AEU engineering union, and long after he was elected to parliament in a by-election in the 1980s.

A long-time "fixer" for the merged union's right-wing slate, Spellar backed Tony Blair's favourite trade unionist, Sir Ken Jackson; but his hitherto safe office berth was threatened by the surprise defeat of Jackson at the hands of the relatively unknown Derek Simpson. Not that this stopped Spellar from his usual machinations. Knowing that the largely appointed union executive was pretty much out Simpson's control, Spellar continued pulling the strings behind the scenes of the right-wing "members first" faction.

But Spellar was caught bang to rights with leaked correspondence detailing contacts between him and a mysterious "Pat" in 10 Downing Street. The subject? What to do about the new awkward lefty, Derek Simpson!

As for the mysterious "Pat", some union insiders point the finger at Downing Street fixer Pat McFadden. Derek Simpson has written to Tony Blair asking what he intends to do about his meddling minister, and questions have been asked about Spellar's union office, for which he has paid a peppercorn rent and which he has failed to declare in the register of member's interests. Now union member Paul Birkett has written to the parliamentary commissioner for standards demanding an investigation – alleging that Spellar received "material benefit from my union, Amicus" and that "the benefit would be in the region of £50,000".

MEMBERS of the health section of MSF, the Manufacturing, Science and Finance branch of Amicus, have been upset by an online noticeboard set up to answer queries from rank-and-file members and shop stewards.

Answers are given by a figure known online as "theAmicusBod" – an alias for Keith Hutson, an Amicus researcher and organiser. Some of his responses to members' queries regarding the Agenda for Change project (A4C), which could see some health workers' pay cut, have been brusque, to say the least.

In response to a question about A4C from "Gerry", a MSF-Amicus shop steward, "theAmicusBod" suggested he should stop "seeing the world through shit tinted spectacles", was talking a "load of crap" and should "extract your head from your backside before responding". Hutson concludes: "I am off to bang my head against a brick wall. I pity the members you represent, or not as the case may be."

So lives the spirit of brotherhood in cyberspace!

'Blackleg'

DRUG UPDATE

WHEN scientists at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore announced that one night spent taking ecstasy could be linked to the onset of Parkinson's disease later in life, the story was an obvious lead for the tabloids.

"ECSTASY TIMEBOMB!" screeched the *Sun* on 27 September 2002, while in the *Mail* James Chapman warned that "one million Britons who take Ecstasy every weekend are playing Russian roulette with their brains".

One year later, the academics behind the research have sheepishly admitted that the monkeys they used in tests were actually administered a completely different drug by mistake, and that when they repeated the experiment using ecstasy, "the results achieved bore no relation to the earlier findings".

While several papers reported the scientific cock-up, the *Sun* and *Mail* remained strangely unwilling to correct their earlier scaremongering.

ARE Britain's former nuclear boffins finally mellowing out? An interesting new patent application has been filed by AEA Technology, formerly the UK Atomic Energy Authority, for a cannabis-smoking device.

"Check out the laughing policeman"

Perhaps not. Strange as it sounds, the company has branched out into medical technology and devised the "cannabis aerosol" for drug delivery to the lungs – presumably in readiness for medical use of the drug.

So, having thrown the technical might of AEA at the invention, what have they come up with? Well, the neat technical drawing filed with the patent office looks a lot like a device plenty of people have been building for decades – generally using milk bottles, coffee jars and a fair amount of sticky tape.

Dictionary Corner

HOON (n): a lout, yob; a pimp *(Chambers)*

HOON (n): *Austral & NZ informal*: a hooligan *(Collins)*

HOON (n): a vulgar type, often male, a hooligan
HOON (v): to hoon, to act in an unacceptable way *(Urban Online Dictionary)*

HOON (n): a lout, a rough; a crazy person, a 'clot'; a ponce *(OED)*

EYE TV

Fifteen-To-One (C4)
Teachers (C4)

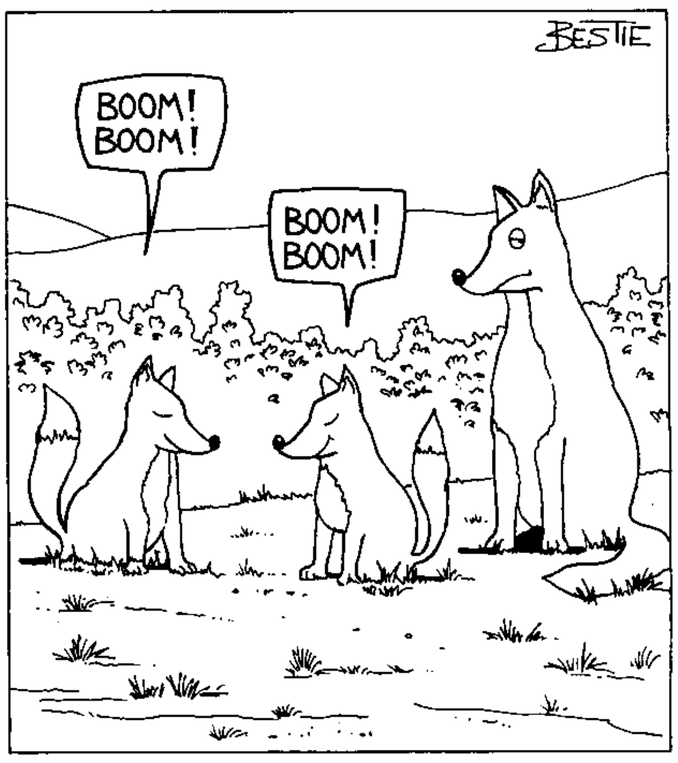
PROGRAMMES come and programmes go: it's the natural rhythm of things. Fifteen-To-One, the weekday quiz show hosted by the faintly menacing blazer-clad figure of William G. Stewart, is finishing after 16 years – a good run by any standards, and almost miraculous by the standards of Channel 4, where it's traditional to cut things down in their prime.

So, no longer will 15 people with very strange faces peer out of the screen at 3.45 each afternoon, fearfully aware that they have actually volunteered to answer abstruse questions about US state capitals and Henry VIII's wives. No longer will a million or two regular viewers settle back and witness the bloodshed, wondering whether they should go on the programme themselves.

Come the new year, when the current run finishes, something nowhere near as good will take its place and *Fifteen-To-One* will become a pleasant memory, to be recalled with an ironic chuckle by Stuart Maconie and Kate Thornton on a Saturday night clip show this time next year. That's television, as executives are wont to say between toots.

But why does *Fifteen-To-One* have to end? What purpose does it solve? There's no doubt that Channel 4 has wanted rid of the show for a while. Last year, on the channel's insistence, small adjustments to the format started to be made, as they often are when executives get bored of a long-running programme. Example: after the first contestants were knocked out in round one, we no longer saw them sitting down, we had to see them walk away in humiliation, because this is what they do in *The Weakest Link*.

It's a trivial thing; but a successful TV format is an agglomeration of trivial things. What this told viewers was that some fool in an office wished he had *The Weakest Link* on his channel and not *Fifteen-To-One*. And it told independent producers to start pitching alternatives. The problem, as Channel 4 sees it, is that *Fifteen-To-One* is old. It's watched by old people. Old people appear on it. Advertisements for step-in baths and Saga holidays top and tail it.



UNFORTUNATELY YOUNG FOXES ONLY HAVE ONE FAMOUS ROLE MODEL

All the same could be said of *Countdown*, which follows it in the "quiz hour". But *Countdown* also has a cult following among students and the long-term unemployed. It has, in Richard Whiteley, the ultimate ironic teatime quiz show host, whose relentless puns would surely have occasioned a long-term prison sentence in less enlightened times. Remarkably for a programme that sometimes hires Sir Bernard Ingham, it's not wholly uncool. And so Channel 4 can live with it. The problem of defining yourself by what's cool and what's not cool is that you end up commissioning some terrible programmes. **Teachers**, now limping through its third season, is a case in point.

It's based on a single gag: that the teachers at so-and-so comprehensive are even more childish than the children they teach. A simple enough idea, you would have thought, but because it defines the show, the show has no room to develop any further. What seemed refreshing for 10 minutes in the first episode is merely arch and annoying by season three. Its star, Andrew Lincoln, left the show after season two (although he returns in this week's episode with an even sillier beard than Mark Thompson's), leaving a not-quite-interesting-enough cast of subsidiary characters to try to keep the thing going. And yet Channel 4 also tries to keep the thing going because (at least until recently) *Teachers* was its only renewable drama series. Others come and others go, but *Teachers* stays, presumably because it actually is watched by students and the long-term unemployed, although obviously not by anybody else.

The cancellation of *Fifteen-To-One*, the survival of *Teachers*, the recommissioning of reality nonsense *The Salon* – the wheels seem to have fallen off Channel 4, and the undercarriage is now scraping along the ground. If ITV, BBC1 and BBC2 weren't in even worse trouble, the relentless decline into banality of the fourth channel might attract more attention. As it is, Beardie and his dimwits are riding their luck. It's the viewers, as ever, who truly suffer.

'Couch Potato'

AD NAUSEAM

LAST week the Independent Television Commission (ITC) ruled on an issue first brought to light in *Eye* 1083. Channel 5 had broadcast a programme named *Dinner Doctors*, which was bankrolled by Heinz. The programme itself, however, featured recipes using products like beans and pasta, which raised a few eyebrows.

The ITC ruling on *Dinner Doctors* said that no code was broken because the Heinz brand was not shown. It warned, however, that the show "came very close to having an overall promotional effect for Heinz".

Such a vapid decree simply blurred boundaries further. For *Dinner Doctors* was a tentative first step into feature-length commercials – exactly the kind of thing the advertising industry is looking to promote as traditional 30-second slots are increasingly ignored. Several agencies have already set up special departments to help advertisers "exist in the space around ads", as BBH's creative director John O'Keefe called it. Advertelevision will undoubtedly be taken further, and the ITC should have called time while it still could.

Here's one example to look forward to, however, coming soon courtesy of the BBC. A recent internal email boasted that "in the first joint promotion of its kind, a series of 12 two-minute programmes called 'Scenic Days Out' will be produced by BBC Broadcast and screened on the UKTV channels. The content will be mirrored and expanded upon in a 36-page guide to be inserted into our magazines and likely to be distributed with every new Renault Scenic car sold between October and November."

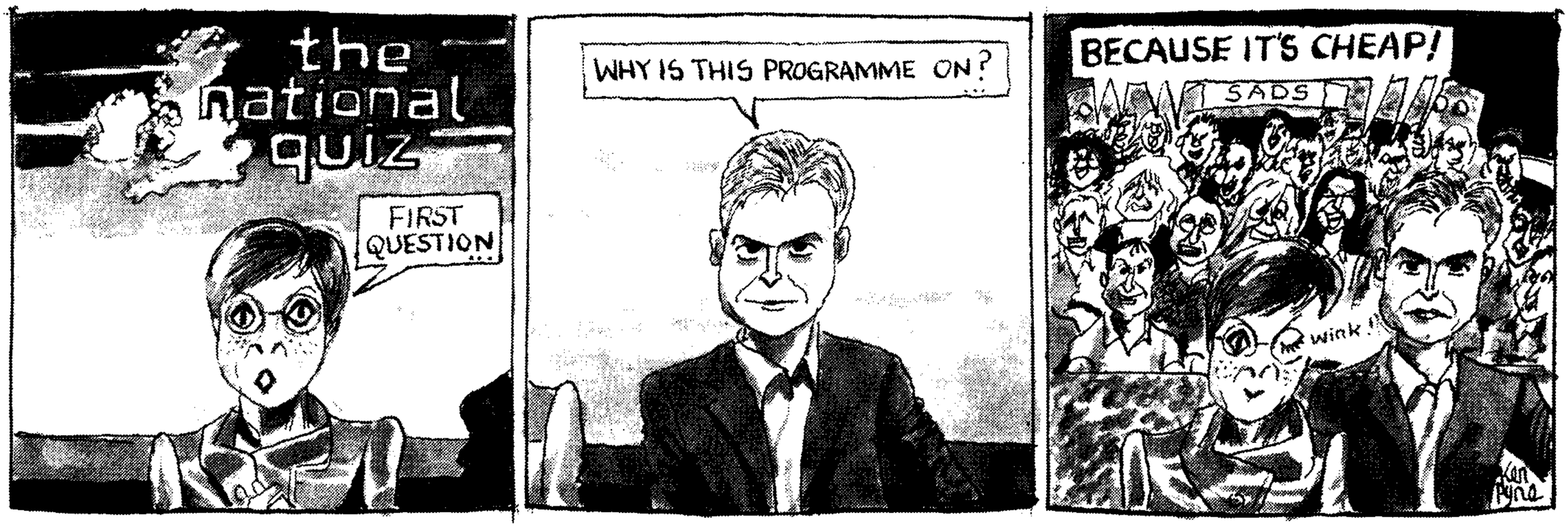
What is not clear is to what extent the public will be made aware whether this is advertising, broadcasting, publishing or a schlock medley of all three. What *is* clear is that the deal is worth £400,000 to the Beeb.

"There are storm clouds gathering re the freedom to advertise food to children," said a call-to-arms from Geoffrey Russell, director for media affairs at the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.

His memo claimed that curtailing advertising to children "allows [parents] an easy way of passing 'blame' for obesity in their off-spring to someone else. The threat to advertisers if pressure for a ban were to build, however, is very real and could be very harmful."

The memo directed IPA members to an article in the *Guardian* in August which proved beyond doubt that "it's not adverts that make you fat". Quite right, it's p-p-picking up too many Penguins, Enjoying More Happy Meals and dunking Dairylea till the cows come home. Now what on earth would make kids want to do that?

PS: The article was by Marina Palomba, legal director of... the IPA.



MEDIA NEWS

AS IF the Hutton inquiry weren't enough, yet another chapter in the BBC's annus horribilis opens on 21 October, this time in a Hong Kong district commercial court. Jeff Taylor, a former director of BBC Worldwide, stands trial on charges of bribery and accepting illegal kickbacks.

BBC Worldwide is the Beeb's commercial arm, with a £640m turnover from television programmes, videos, magazines and spin-off merchandise. In 1998, under the leadership of self-styled golden boy Rupert Gavin, BBCW decided to "move up the value chain" and make more money from selling toys such as Tweenies and Teletubbies. BBCW's investment committee, chaired by Gavin, drew up and approved an agreement with Eurasia Management Services (EMS), which would design and manufacture the toys in southern China before distributing them through big companies such as Tomy and Mattel.

Sales increased and everyone was happy… until officers of Hong Kong's independent commission against corruption (ICAC) arrived at BBCW's White City offices in October 2001. Jeff Taylor was arrested in Hong Kong a few days later, along with two British directors of EMS, Syd Edels and Dan Berman. The allegation was that Taylor and the two EMS men persuaded the manufacturers to falsely inflate the price of goods supplied to the BBC, and then to pay the difference between the true price and the inflated one into a company controlled by Berman. Edels and Berman, both charged with conspiracy, will be joining Taylor in the dock next month.

Taylor is an old friend of Edels, who is godfather to his son. But he had no authority to place orders and almost no contact with the distributors who placed the orders. So how did the alleged scam work?

Some light may be shed on this by the chief prosecution witness Mark Johnstone, deputy managing director of global marketing and brand development at BBCW, who proposed the deal with EMS and has now been granted immunity from prosecution by ICAC. Before joining BBCW Johnstone worked for the accountancy firm Arthur Andersen. When the EMS affair blew up, the BBC audit committee, headed by Dame Pauline Neville Jones, instituted an independent audit of BBCW and EMS activities – conducted by none other than Andersen, Johnstone's old employer. The report has not been released.

Johnstone and Gavin both deny that they knew about the alleged payments to EMS. Their task now is to explain *why* they didn't know, since EMS had an office in BBCW headquarters and, according to an internal BBC report, BBCW "effectively controlled all important [EMS] decisions". Another problem is to explain why they ignored letters from a disgruntled former EMS supplier in the Far East, Gabby Chan, explicitly informing them of the "payments". (Chan was subsequently arrested for fraud and embezzlement, despite which BBCW paid her off with $150,000.)

Rupert Gavin brushes the problem aside by saying that "I receive quite a large volume of correspondence which I personally view briefly"; while Johnstone insists that "I did not pick up on the point". Chan's tip-off gave them the opportunity to stop the payments if these seemed improper, but they did nothing of the sort: in fact they subsequently began negotiating an *extension* of the deal with EMS.

More problems emerge in the shambles known as the BBCW legal department. Despite a warning from the BBC internal audit department emphasising the need for a formal legal contract between BBCW and EMS, nothing was done for a further year.

Publicly, at least, the BBC is insisting this was "an isolated case". Certainly Gavin must be hoping that nothing emerges in Hong Kong which would dent his reputation as a business whizz: he has recently been tipped to head up the merged Carlton and Granada.

GOING LIVE

ITN's lunchtime news went live to reporter Harry Smith outside Bedford police station on 11 September to cover the re-arrest of DC Brian Stevens.

"He was released from here in the early hours of the morning," Smith revealed. That was a full 11 hours before he'd even set up his camera.

TREVOR McDonald, it was pompously announced, "defied his editors by refusing to report the government's key defence of war in Iraq – the infamous 45-minute claim".

Just as well that he did. After all, he wrongly believed the claim referred to the possibility "that London could be hit". And not even the most creative Downing Street dossier-compiler has yet dared to suggest that.

ANDREW Gilligan was happy enough to leak Dr David Kelly's name to his email contacts on the foreign affairs select committee, but he was far more discreet when dealing with colleagues at the BBC.

When asked by John Piennar and another BBC political hack if Dr Kelly was his source, Gilligan denied it emphatically.

YET MORE bad news for those waiting for Greg Dyke's "Cut The Crap" initiative to begin. The BBC has announced that it will send 1,500 managers a year on six-month long leadership courses to encourage "greater synergy".

Designed "to achieve step-change improvements throughout the organisation", these courses are "out-sourced" to the Ashridge Business School and include "group workshops" and "large events", as well as four days of residential workshops for all "delegates".

The BBC claims this is "funded from the BBC's existing training budget". No wonder so many other training commitments are being pruned.

Plugged In

Subscription-less Freeview's range of channels looks cracking to someone who has experienced nothing but the four or five analogue channels. For anyone used to the breadth of Sky or cable, though, it seems decidedly thin, with neither movie channels nor even the ubiquitous CNN.

Sky Plus also wins by several lengths on the recorder front.

David Hewson, *Sunday Times* (prop: R. Murdoch)

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Captain Scarlet O'Hara

BBC News 24 is to be rebranded to offer a "more robust rivalry" with Sky News.

This means it will be redesigned to "look and feel" more like its rival channel. Stand by for new graphics, blonder hairdos and a new set with big, big screens for reporters to pout in front of. Once again, thanks to a focus group, the BBC's attempt to offer viewers more choice will end up giving them exactly the opposite.

DUMB BRITAIN

No Win No Fee, BBC1

Paul Ross: In which county would you find Wentworth golf course?

Contestant: I'll have to say Wentworth because I don't know any counties.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: A Catalan is an inhabitant of a region in Spain known in English as what?

Contestant: Catatonia.

Robinson: In medicine, what word beginning with "G" represents the area of medicine specialising in the treatment of the elderly?

Contestant: Gynaecology.

DUMB AMERICA

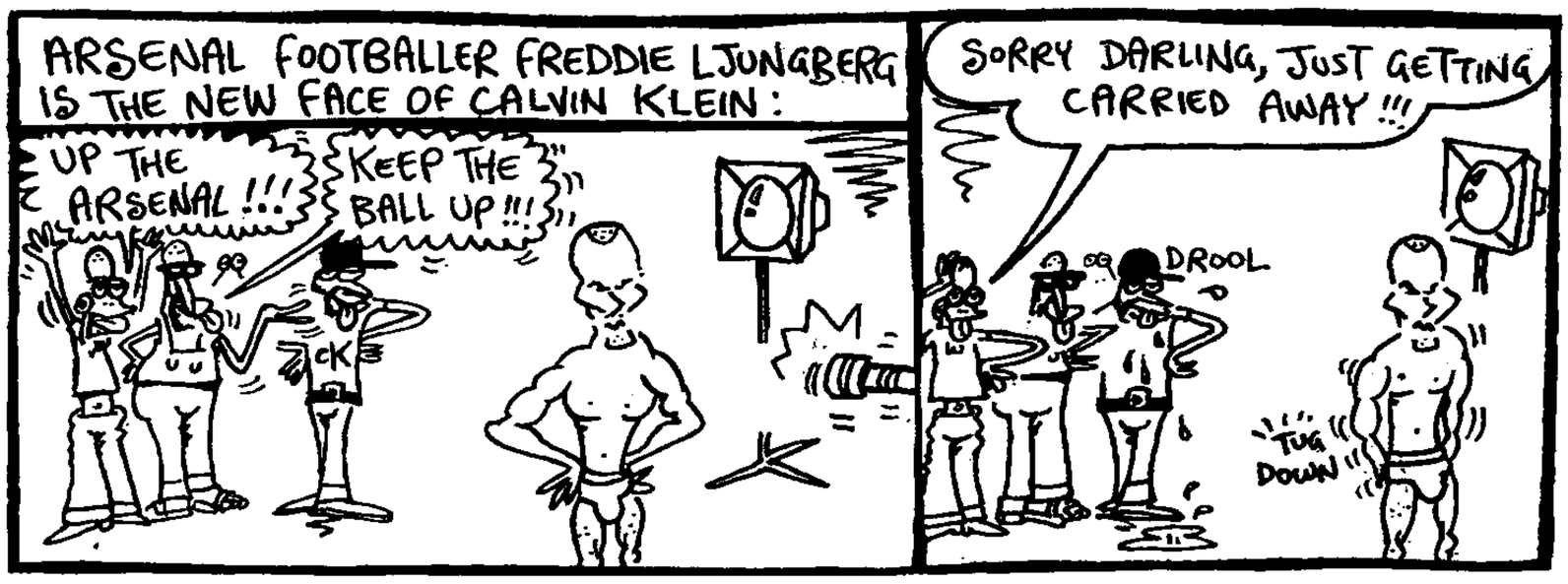
The Weakest Link

Anne Robinson: Which island in the Indian Ocean was named after the date of its discovery, the 25th of December 1643?

Contestant (*after deep thought*): Guam?

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


ARSENAL FOOTBALLER FREDDIE LJUNGBERG IS THE NEW FACE OF CALVIN KLEIN:
UP THE ARSENAL!!!
KEEP THE BALL UP!!!
cK
SORRY DARLING, JUST GETTING CARRIED AWAY!!!
DROOL
TUG DOWN

DOING THE ROUNDS

IT-thing trouble

"THE remaining contracts will be signed by *Christmas*, or we will not have Christmas." So says Richard "the Grinch" Granger, the UK's highest-paid civil servant, brought in a year ago to deliver the government's absurdly ambitious NHS IT programme.

The stakes could not be higher. The success of the NHS plan is largely dependent on the Integrated Care Record Service (ICRS) being in place in time for the next election; but a recent poll of IT experts found that 92 percent believed the government's targets would not be met.

The problem in a vast health service threatened by political deadlines is that Granger is trying to do too much, too fast. The need for ICRS is not in doubt. If it works, a single IT system serving the entire NHS would enable electronic prescribing and booking of appointments, freedom of referral, easy communication between general practice and hospital, electronic records accessible anywhere and the collection of accurate data for research, payment and quality control.

At present, the NHS is riddled with different IT systems which aren't compatible. Doctors transferring records from one system to another can lose data or find the process near impossible. Computing in general practice is a decade ahead of that in hospital, because GPs got together with IT companies to design systems that work very well for them and are essential both for patient care and to claim fees for hitting an ever-increasing number of targets. They are understandably wary of transferring to a new, centrally controlled "one size fits all" service which may not work so well.

Alas, in the speed to deliver Granger has had to be controlling and secretive. Most NHS staff are completely in the dark about ICRS. Select GPs were given a brief opportunity to road test new systems, but most feel they have had little input. And at the top end, only two companies (BT and IBM) are now bidding to deliver ICRS after Lockheed Martin dropped out earlier this month, allegedly because of the unrealistic time scale, high transfer of risk and low potential profit margin.

The programme is also not without risk to patients. The image of the NHS as one big happy family where information shared throughout will remain confidential is very optimistic. Just who will have access to your electronic records? For example, will the NHS tracing service be used to track errant parents for maintenance? Under ICRS, patients will have no choice whether their records are kept on the central "data spine". The aim is for this data to be "pseudonymised" for use in planning and research, and only to be shared with your consent. But clinicians will be able to override patient instructions in some circumstances.

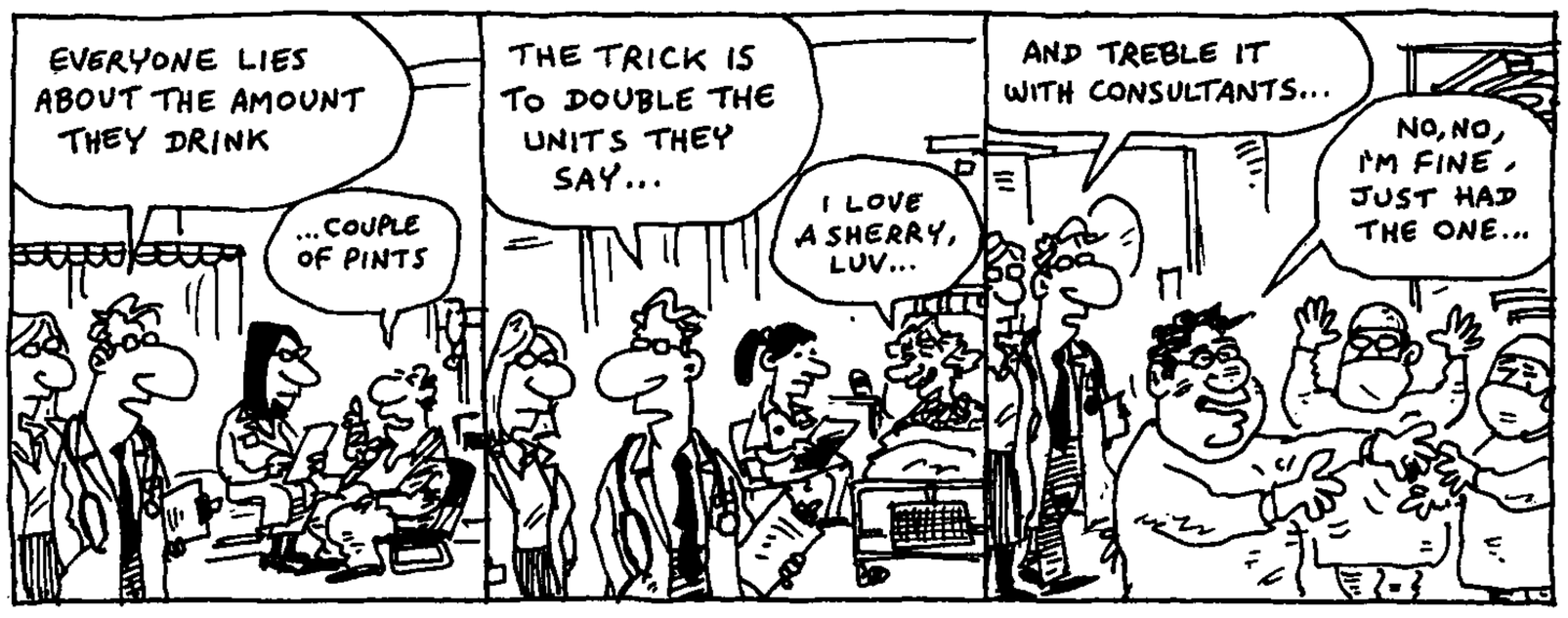
"New" Labour is investing £2.3bn over three years to kick start the NHS IT programme, but its ultimate success will depend on recurrent funding. Large corporations spend 5 to 10 percent of their budget on IT, whereas the NHS spends just 1.8 percent. The NHS needs to spend a minimum of £9bn on IT by 2010, but there is no sign of the resources being committed. Staff shortages will be another major barrier to implementation – who will keep NHS IT working while staff are training to use the new system? And will IBM and BT get cold feet like Lockheed, or deliver a simple, cheap system that works everywhere in the NHS but doesn't do what the staff need it to do?

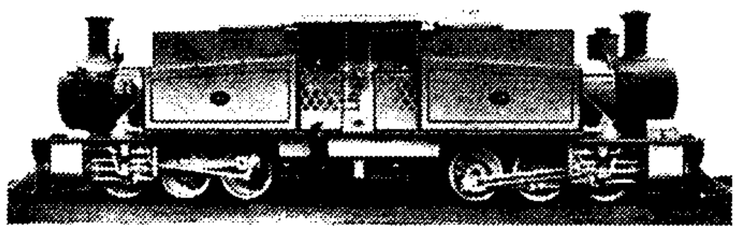
As GP Paul Cundy puts it: "You just know in your bones that anything distributed nationally will not work. You need the input of those who actually clip the toenails and change the bandages." No wonder Granger is grumpy.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY


EVERYONE LIES ABOUT THE AMOUNT THEY DRINK
...COUPLE OF PINTS
THE TRICK IS TO DOUBLE THE UNITS THEY SAY...
I LOVE A SHERRY, LUV...
AND TREBLE IT WITH CONSULTANTS...
NO, NO, I'M FINE, JUST HAD THE ONE...



SIGNAL FAILURES

Stagecoach number crunching

STAGECOACH founder Brian Souter awarded himself a 72 percent pay rise in 2002-03, taking home £800,000 for a year when the group made a £466m loss and its turnover fell. What will Souter bank this year, now that Stagecoach has been assured a brighter future by the "strategic" rail authority?

Souter has learned that making money is easier in Britain than overseas and sold bus firms in Hong Kong and America to concentrate on our unique public-private rail partnerships. Last year Stagecoach's only increase in profits came in its UK rail division, and that was when its South West Trains was getting a measly £36m subsidy from the SRA. Now the SRA has agreed to give SWT £170m a year. Commuters will get new trains to replace those that should have been scrapped by 1998. Longer trains for south-west London and improvements to Clapham Junction station, promised in Stagecoach's winning franchise bid, are not included. The extra cash *from* the SRA will cover the fines SWT pays *to* the SRA for its pisspoor performance (this is officially known as the SRA's "incentive regime").

SWT is the biggest of the 10 franchises based on London commuting. It accounts for about 22 percent of the traffic by passenger miles but now gets more than 60 percent of the subsidy. Thameslink, First Great Eastern and Thames Trains are paying premiums to the SRA so their passengers effectively pay a special Stagecoach tax.

There was good news too for Souter's bank account when the SRA agreed to give Virgin Trains an extra £282m this year, instead of the £13.3m (at 1997 prices) Virgin originally promised to pay the state. Stagecoach owns half of Virgin Trains and would have been hit financially had the SRA not offered Virgin a £106m bailout last year.

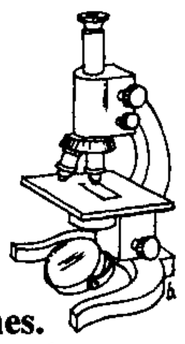
Last year Virgin's two franchises accounted for 42 percent of passenger miles on the five big inter-city franchises – but took 108 percent of the total subsidy to those franchises. GNER and Midland Mainline paid premiums of £27m and £15m; their passengers effectively paid a special Virgin tax.

SWT's extra subsidy over three years and Virgin's bailout for this year add up to about £680m. The SRA now proposes to cut £600m from maintenance of many regional and freight lines, where journeys will be slower and passengers and goods displaced to roads.

All this should be no surprise to MPs on the transport select committee who were told last November by Richard Bowker, SRA chairman and chief executive, that stabilising Stagecoach was important (*Eye* 1083). That was a month before Bowker, previously co-chairman of Virgin Rail, travelled to Perth to give a talk at Souter's church, purely for reasons of personal faith (*Eye* 1070). Bowker has said it's "shoddy" of the *Eye* to write of his father's position as a Stagecoach executive, so we won't go into that.

'Dr B. Ching'

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE



EVERY so often press reports emerge of an invention which will, at a stroke, abolish our noisy polluting internal combustion engines.

The MDI air car, developed by Frenchman Guy Negre, runs on a tank of compressed air. It is claimed that it will cost 3p a mile to run. The *Eye* spoke to one physicist who went through the figures and confirmed that the air car could work in principle. Nevertheless some are sceptical that this marvellous-sounding machine is real. And just as many doubt the existence of the "almost ready" flying car being developed in California (can reach 200mph, be flown by a child, achieve 40mpg etc, etc). It has been "about to undergo full flight tests" for as long as I can remember and has been puffed by no less than *New Scientist*. If anyone sees either of these fantastic machines in the flesh please get in touch.

'Boffin'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

THE CON-SULTANS

LABOUR-run Tower Hamlets may be Britain's most deprived borough, but at least the council is doing its bit to keep one section of the community above the poverty line – the legion of "consultants" it employs in managerial roles at inflated pay rates.

As *Eye* 1087 revealed, PR woman Lorraine Langham is paid the equivalent of £130,000 a year purely to deal with press queries about an alleged multi-million pound fraud. Another senior manager, Gill Coney, who has cost the council £900 *a day* since June, has proved her worth by producing a manual for staff which explains how to use the telephone. "Human resources" consultant Graham Sherbourne, one of three HR personnel provided by a firm called Public Sector Consultants Ltd (PSC), rubs along on a mere £350 per day. In all, the council admits to spending a total of £9m a year on consultants.

By an extraordinary coincidence, PSC, which has supplied several of these high-earners to the council, has had on its board since February, as a non-executive director, one Eleanor Kelly… who was, until last year, chief executive of Tower Hamlets.

● MEANWHILE, with Inspector Knacker looking into alleged fraud scandals at Tower Hamlets (*Eye* 1087) which have already led to the suspension of two councillors by the Labour party, and rumours of more suspensions to come, the council has appointed a new head of "research and scrutiny" on £55,000 a year, part of whose remit is to act as a sort of ethical watchdog. From a strong field of applicants, councillors on the selection panel chose Michael Keating as the best man for the job. He shouldn't have too much difficulty settling in when he starts in November. Until May last year he was a Labour councillor in… Tower Hamlets.

WINTER OF DISCONTENT

THERE was mirth in Doncaster when it emerged over the summer that mayor Martin Winter had quietly signed up last year for a £700 training course at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. The idea was to improve his delivery of the case for the Beacon of Sleaze being considered a forward-looking authority.

Winter appeared to be entering into the dramatic spirit when, at a council meeting, he produced a wand and announced he "could not make problems disappear as if by magic". However, a recent check on expenses revealed that Winter had in fact truanted from his course at Rada last November. Instead he elected to strut and fret at a Local Government Association seminar for Labour members, held in London on the same day. Auditors were alerted to the fact that expenses are not payable for attendance at events "the objects of which are wholly or partly political". Winter's trip to London cost £230, including a train fare of £179 – and will now have to be met from party funds.

Meanwhile the mayor is waiting for councillors to decide whether to award him a 55 percent pay rise, from £41,808 a year to £64,799.

ON THE SQUARE

MORE ructions involving the future of London's poshest housing estate, Dolphin Square in Pimlico (*Eye* 1088). The district auditor has been asked to investigate whether Conservative members of Westminster council, by charging only council tax on the 250-room Dolphin Square Hotel, rather than higher commercial rates, acted fraudulently. Councillors justified the dodge by describing the hotel as "short-let apartments".

One who may be required to give evidence to the DA is Alan Bradley, Dolphin Square's ward councillor. Back in 1994 he narrowly avoided being surcharged and disqualified from holding public office for his part in the gerrymandering scandal which sealed the fate of Dame Shirley Porter and her deputy, David Weeks.

Bradley, who lives in one of Dolphin Square's agreeable penthouses, was a member of the Committee of Management (COM), which controls the 1,050 flats and hotel, from 1986 until last summer. He resigned a week after the district valuer confirmed what the freeholder, Friends Provident, had first told Westminster back in 1998: namely that the hotel should pay proper commercial rates, not just council tax.

At the same time as sitting on the COM, currently chaired by Lady Tesco's former chief executive Rodney Brooke, Bradley was, for a period, chair of Westminster's planning committee. He should, therefore, have grasped the significance of the issues raised by Friends Provident. But perhaps, as he passed the hotel every day, he averted his eyes.

JONES THE JEREMIAH

FLINTSHIRE council leader Alex "dodgy boiler" Aldridge has mounted a belated damage-limitation exercise after the employment tribunal victory of the council's former internal auditor Andy Sutton, forced out of his job after senior officers refused to supply him with documents associated with a number of scandals he was attempting to investigate (*Eyes passim*).

As Inspector Dai Knacker's investigation into the council continued last month, Aldridge began his fightback with a hysterical letter to the local press which talked of "black propaganda" fomented by "Jeremiahs and political opportunists" acting with "evil intent". Now he has appointed a special panel to decide whether there should be disciplinary action against chief executive Philip McGreevy and county secretary Andrew Loveridge – both of whom Sutton had accused of obstructing his work.

Alas external auditor PricewaterhouseCoopers has just published a damning report into the council's housing maintenance department. It reveals that an outside contractor whom auditors had twice ordered not to be used was still getting council work; that a heating contractor who never tendered for work was getting £5,000 a month for gas-safety inspections; that workers asked to repair a toilet seat for some reason bought a smoke detector; and that items readily available in the council stores were often purchased from external suppliers anyway.

In four contracts examined by auditors, duplicate materials had been issued, for example two up-and-over garage doors were issued for the same job. Losses over the years could be huge, warn the auditors. More "black propaganda", no doubt.

● IAIN HOGG, the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) candidate for Renfrewshire council who unsuccessfully tried to have his ward's election result overturned after his Labour rival issued an eve-of-poll leaflet full of whopping lies about him (*Eye* 1088), has suffered a fresh blow. Although Labour kept overall control of the council in May by one seat, the Scottish National Party (SNP) garnered more votes across the council. In five marginal wards, including Hogg's Seedhill ward, Labour won by margins of between five and 63 votes. Hogg himself lost by just 10 votes, which was why he was so sore about the defamatory leaflet. When Hogg asked to see the marked-up registers from polling stations in Seedhill – a way of checking that the numbers of votes recorded tally with those actually cast – he was told that all three were "missing". It turned out that 33 registers were missing, including all those from the marginal wards. Renfrewshire's chief executive and returning officer Tom Scholes promised to investigate. A report has now concluded that the missing registers were, er, mistaken for rubbish and dumped at a landfill site. Scholes, who earns £113,000 a year as chief exec, has no plans to repay his £12,500 returning officer's fee.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

MUCH focus has been turned on the closure of the world-renowned department of East Asian Studies at Durham University. But another, smaller department at the same university has also been axed despite its hugely admired research and plaudits from throughout the academic community.

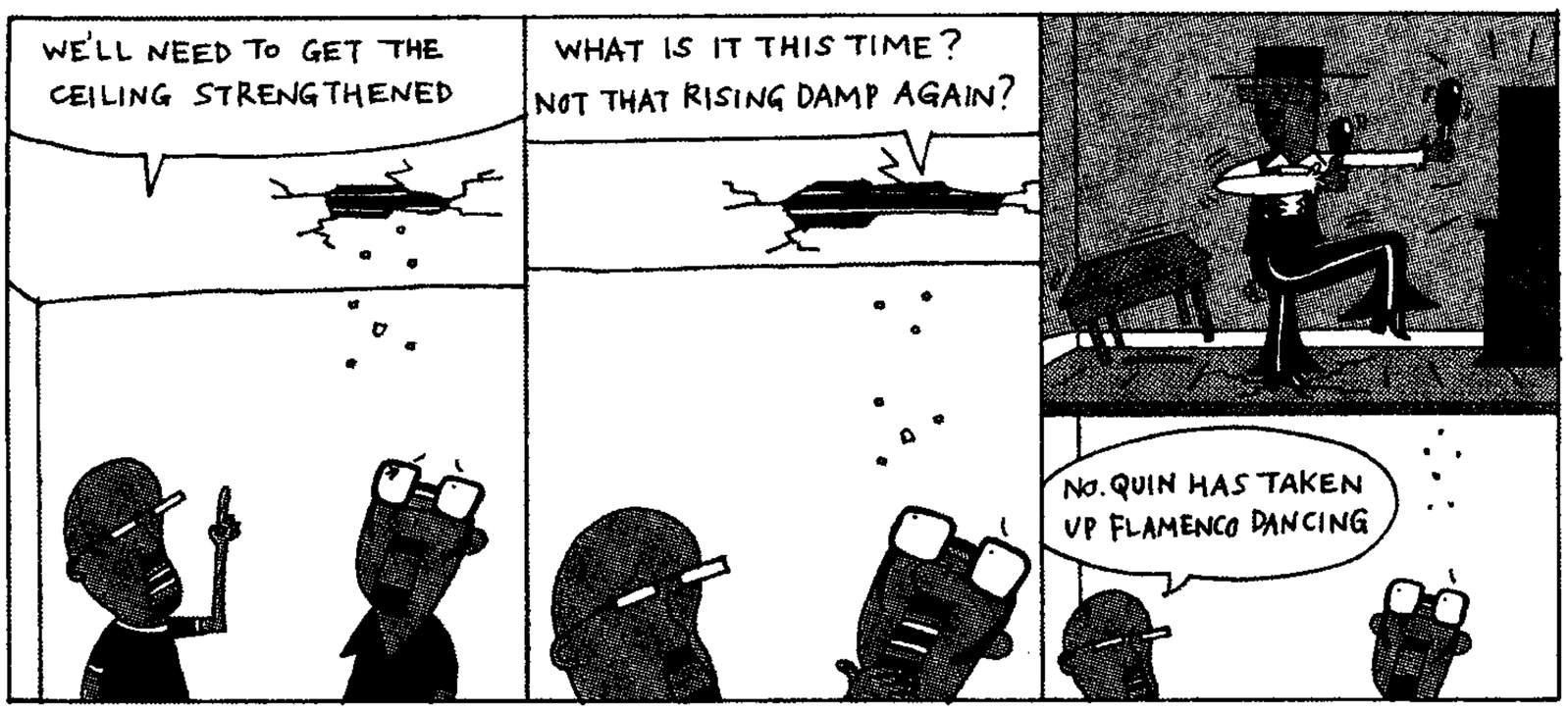
Members of the department of linguistics and English were told this summer that this October's intake of students will be their last. In a plan to avoid redundancies there is talk of shipping the entire department's staff to another institution, but since the university will not hand over the money-spinning undergraduate quota along with the experts, the teaching staff are not optimistic they will find a new home together.

The department is ranked fourth best for linguistics in the whole of the UK and gained a score of five in the national Research Assessment in 2001 (the only higher score being 5*). In the university's investment plan, linguistics is described as a "relatively low demand" subject area, yet it has one of the largest groups of postgraduate students in Durham.

Professor Noam Chomsky of MIT – perhaps the world's most famous linguistics professor – described the Durham department as making "highly important contributions to higher education in England and to the study of language. The loss would be a most serious one."

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


WE'LL NEED TO GET THE CEILING STRENGTHENED
WHAT IS IT THIS TIME? NOT THAT RISING DAMP AGAIN?
NO. QUIN HAS TAKEN UP FLAMENCO DANCING

NOOKS and CORNERS

ANOTHER sound, decent and carefully designed school building is under threat – and this time the menace is total demolition rather than gratuitous new windows (see last *Eye*).

Gilthill Primary School at Kimberley, north-west of Nottingham, went up in 1893 and is a sensible, unpretentious but handsome structure of brick. Built by the Greasley School Board (a locally elected body which was also responsible for the nearby Beauvale Boys School, once attended by D.H. Lawrence), the building is now more than a century old but is structurally sound. The main problem is that Gilthill has been so successful it is now too small, and some children are being taught in portacabins.

Land had been set aside for an additional primary school to serve the area but, in its wisdom, Nottingham county council, the education authority, sold the site to developers. It now proposes to demolish the 1893 school to make way for a car park and exciting new school building with a flat roof and modish porthole windows.

Gilthill Primary School

This is not popular. More than 1,500 locals have petitioned the council, which dismisses the opponents as sentimentalists "who are not thinking of the children".

The council insists the existing building is not suitable for modern teaching, that the classrooms are cramped and that the hall is too low for sports (so what: build a new sports hall). Such knee-jerk progressive opinion ignores the fact that board schools were carefully designed with airy and hygienic interior spaces lit by large windows. Of course such buildings are expensive to repair, but post-war school buildings – with flat roofs and light construction – have usually proved less durable and even more costly to maintain than traditional masonry ones.

Besides, to blame buildings for administrative or financial problems misses the point and is typical "new" Labour hype. And, as usual, the trouble starts at the top. In May, schools minister David Miliband announced a programme of school building to divert attention from the real problems with our education system. In the DfES document, *Building Schools for the Future*, it states that "the Victorians bequeathed a visible inheritance of their commitment to education. It is now time – indeed, the time is long overdue – for us to start the systematic renewal of all schools, so that our legacy to the future generation is at least as great."

So huge sums of public money will be spent replacing perfectly good old buildings (as well as ones that need replacing) in pursuit of a rigid policy of systematisation worthy of the late Nicolai Ceausescu. And, as many will be built under PFI – the private finance initiative – the results will be as ugly as they are cheap. Odd, isn't it, that schools hampered by cramped ancient buildings – Eton, say, or Winchester, or Tony's *alma mater*, Fettes – still manage to be successful? There is no financial or practical argument to justify the destruction of Gilthill Primary School.

SINCE I reported on the threat to the churches of Brighton 'n' Hove (Eye 1086), letters have poured in to tell me that the man behind this economically-motivated rationalisation – the Venerable Douglas McKittrick, archdeacon of Chichester – has just moved in to a new five-bedroom house in a smart part of Hove, which cost the diocese some £750,000 (the archdeacon is unmarried, by the way). I also learn that among the 15 churches proposed for closure by this worthy prelate is St Bartholemew's – that colossal, sublime brick ark near the railway station, which has to be seen to be believed. It is not simply one of the greatest glories of Brighton; it is one of the most extraordinary and marvellous Victorian churches in Britain. Go and see it while you can.

But closures are proposed all over England. In Birmingham, St Margaret's, Ward End, has been selected for the chop although it has a reasonably-sized and active congregation, while nearby Christchurch, built in 1935 as a daughter church and far less interesting, is to stay. How and why are such decisions made? St Margaret's was built in 1834-35 on the site of a chapel begun in 1517 and is a good example of Commissioner's Gothic. It is sometimes attributed to the famous Thomas Rickman, but in fact was designed by one John Frith. No matter. Pevsner noticed it, describing it as a "small and simple building", so it surely ought to be one which merits keeping, especially as the site is hallowed and it contains a monument to the 18th century Birmingham historian, William Hutton. But sentimentality naturally never enters the Church of England's deliberations.

'Piloti'

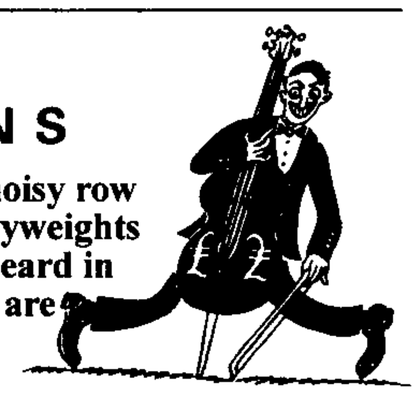
I-SPY

Sunshine and smiles: Police share a joke at Europe's largest arms fair, in the Docklands, which opened to mainly peaceful protests

Metro

Submitted by Geoff Crabtree. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS



SOUR notes and a noisy row involving cultural heavyweights like Simon Rattle are heard in Somerset, where locals are in the odd position of having a county music adviser who seems not only uninterested in classical music but downright hostile to it.

Earlier this year the county issued a glossily packaged cultural strategy document which enthused about what was being done to raise the artistic horizons of local residents, especially children. Many of its readers were involved in music education, including Maureen Lehane Wishart, who runs Jackdaws Educational Trust – a respected organisation that introduces people of all ages to what, for want of a better word, you might call "serious" music.

Not unnaturally, they turned the pages looking for some reference to where they fitted into the great scheme – only to find they didn't. "Serious" music had been more or less eradicated from the plans. No Bach, no Mozart, nothing of the kind.

An angry Mrs Wishart started writing letters – in reply to which the said music adviser, Graham Bland, made some extraordinary statements. Organisations like Jackdaws and the world of classical music they represented were, he said, no more than a "museum" that no one wanted any more. The proof of this was that a mere 4 percent of the public bought classical CDs as opposed to the 59 percent who bought rock and pop; and Somerset was content to do its bit for the classics by supporting bell-ringing and the Glastonbury Festival (which suggests Mr Bland either doesn't know what classical music is or has never been to Glastonbury).

In a state of shock the county's music teachers were then told by one of Bland's officials, the so-called head of music technology for Somerset, that classical music was not suitable as a subject for children in schools. Result: the whole musical education structure in Somerset is in disarray and collapse. Teachers are in rebellion and 44 schools have withdrawn from the county music service, of which Bland is the head.

Names like Thomas Allen and Julian Lloyd-Webber have been drawn into the fight – alongside Rattle who has written to say he is "worried and saddened to see the county music adviser of all people attempting to sideline classical music. We've all spent our working lives trying to ensure that this music is *not* a museum piece… that it's a right and a necessity rather than a luxury."

Similarly worried, now, are the authorities at County Hall who are to hold an emergency meeting at which Bland will be called to account. His job is on the line; and an awful lot of Somerset music teachers are waiting to celebrate his departure.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Amazing how such a mundane figure, hugely inflated, can command so much money!
But that's Damien for you.
Er...
HOXTON SQUARE
"CHARITY" BY D.HIRST

Letters

Carbon dating

Sir,

Martin Burke (Letters, 1088) is indeed naïve in failing to understand any of the basic scientific concepts behind climate change. Compared to geological records, the observed and predicted rates of global warming are very rapid and thus of concern.

Thus, I worry when an environmental engineer confuses past and present climates with weather forecasts that attempt to predict short term events for our immediate benefit rather than describe seasonal averages and much longer term trends. Climate cycles are driven by the Earth's orbital eccentricities and normally regulate atmospheric carbon dioxide levels which fell during the last ice age to around 200 parts per million (ppm) in gas trapped in ice cores extracted from both the Antarctic and Greenland. In a few millennia at the end of the last ice age they rose to around 280 ppm before the start of the industrial revolution. Thanks to the burning of fossil fuels in a few countries, these levels have already reached 360 ppm and will clearly have a major impact on our climate.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID NOWELL FGS.

New Barnet, Herts.

Lookalike

Lucan? **Lucan?** **Lucan?**

Sir,

Have any of your readers noticed the resemblance between Jungly Barry, Billy Gibbons from ZZ Top and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (not from ZZ Top)?

Yours sincerely,
ENA B. MANN,

London W2.

People in greenhouses...

Sir,

May I join Martin Burke (1088) in a spot of professional willy-waving? I too am an engineer, specialising in energy. In the past I worked in geophysics, rubbing shoulders with some big names engaged in computer modelling of complex atmospheric and oceanographic phenomena. Nevertheless I rate my competence to pass judgement on the science of climate change as feck all, though still above that of Mr Burke, who is unable even to differentiate climate and weather (think "wood" and "trees").

As to power generation, our nukes, which are as flexible and responsive as a slab of granite, though less reliable, depend as much on fossil stations for grid stability as renewables do, probably more so. Greenhouse gases are an issue for everyone in the business. Mr Burke should defer to climate scientists to give us the size of the problem, then turn his engineering hand to solving it, rather than making a monkey out of his own profession.

Sorry, but he started it.

Dr ALASTAIR J MARTIN,
C.Eng., M.I.Mech.E.

Via email.

From A to Z levels

Sir,

I do not find it surprising that Mr le Grys wishes to defend A-levels – the intellectual veneer on his sloppy thinking must be invaluable to him. Firstly, if the upward leap in the A-level pass rate is due to evolution, as he suggests, someone ought to inform the Darwinists, as the implied growth in intelligence is rather at odds with the very slow (particularly by political standards) process of natural selection. Besides which, the raw IQ that is linked to genetics and thereby to evolution has little or nothing to do with the A-level pass rate, the A-level mainly testing one's ability to retain information.

Any exam exists to differentiate between candidates. Whether we are better at exams than those students of two decades ago may be a pressing question for the government, but for our generation the question should surely be whether, if so many people receive three As or four, does that achievement matter very much? In short, is it "worthless"?

The tragedy of the A-levels, I would remind Mr le Grys, is not that Private Eye wishes to deny the Smart Young Things of today their intelligence, but rather that we can hardly tell who those Smart Young Things are.

Yours in intellectual frustration,
CANDIDATE 7009 (age 15),

Via email.

Sir,

James Le Grys offers a rather simple-minded analysis of the interminable A-level debate. My understanding is that evolution works over somewhat longer timescales than he envisages.

Leaving aside this minor objection it is, in any case, rather difficult to equate (or not) A-level results from the dim and distant past with current marks: the assessment methods have changed quite dramatically over time, making a meaningful comparison pretty much impossible.

As an admissions tutor for an extremely popular undergraduate course, I am far more concerned by the fact that over a fifth of A-level results are now A grades. As a result, the A-level is no longer able to distinguish effectively among the highest-scoring candidates. I do not really care why there is a ceiling effect with A-level results: falling standards, better teachers, self-serving manipulation by politicians, brighter pupils, changes in assessment procedures, whatever – take your pick.

The practical issue is that any judgement of academic merit based on A-level results is now fairly arbitrary at the top end of the spectrum.

Yours faithfully,
NAME & ADDRESS WITHHELD.

Sir,

The young Mr Le Grys, who wrote imploring us all to marvel at the achievements of the current crop of A-level students, obviously missed the recent Channel 4 documentary "That'll Teach 'em". The premise was that a class of children taken from varying backgrounds and different schools had to spend a month boarding at a school following a 50s style regime.

In the first episode, a group of 30 students who later achieved a 95 percent-plus pass rate at GCSE (with most attaining several A passes) were given an actual 1950s 11-plus Maths exam. In the region of 75 percent of the 15- and 16-year-old students failed, several unable to make it out of the teens in their marks.*

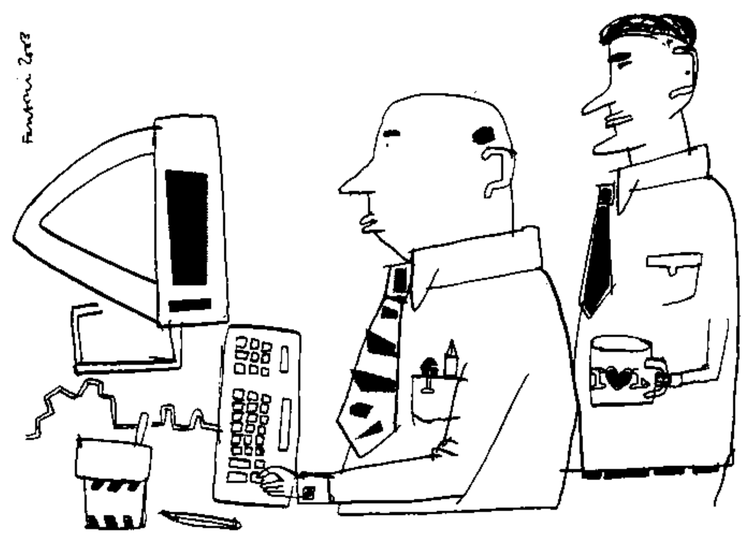
When they later came to take O-levels, with actual 50s questions based purely on the syllabus taught in the preceding four weeks, the vast majority managed to fail every single one (spectacularly in some cases).

A number of the children admitted on camera that they had learned more in these four weeks than in the last year at their regular schools.

STUART COOPER,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"SPAM doesn't bother me. It only takes a few minutes to deal with and some of it can be really quite interesting"

London lodgers?

Sir,

Your excellent article (1087) about Roberto Calvi's execution omitted mentioning that the P2 Masonic lodge also had Silvio Berlusconi as a member, as well as Fascists and Mafiosi. The extent of the power and influence of these cabals is something we will never know, it is clear, however, that it extends to these shores. Please do not print my name.

Yours fearfully,
ANON.

Anagram

Sir,

With the advent of her recent death, can Lord Gnome be unaware that Leni Riefenstahl = Senile Hitler fan?

Yours,
GEOFF DENNIS,

Via email.

School daze

Sir,

We were interested to read your article on architecture and restoration in which you mentioned Little Ealing primary (1088), as we are ex-pupils of the school. You talked about the school windows being changed and described the originals as "in good condition". We sat next to those windows for many a year; in winter we froze because of draughts where the wood was beginning to rot; and in summer we boiled, due to the fact the windows were incredibly stiff and heavy to open. To be quite honest, at the end of our time there, we were glad to see the back of them.

You mentioned Peter Kellie's love for "polystyrene ceilings". Well, surely these are better then the original plaster ones which collapsed, almost crushing poor Miss Burden, our Year 4 teacher. And as for calling the new windows "unnecessary". Well, you didn't sit next to the old ones for seven years, did you? And finally, how dare you blame Peter Kellie. It was a council decision and although he probably had the final say, he's not an architect, he's a head teacher and he was simply putting the students' interests first. We couldn't have asked for a better head teacher.

And we're sure that if F.H. Greenaway and J.E. Newberry had had "aluminium-framed double-glazing" in their time, they would have used it!

Yours sincerely,
ELLEN BUCKERFIELD and
GRACE VASSALLO FLOYD,

London.

Members enclosure

Sir,

D.G. Fletcher Rogers and the dozens of readers who wrote saying that the word "testify" derives from a Roman custom of witnesses taking oaths with their hands on their private parts are misinformed. The primary meaning of the Latin testis is "witness". A man's balls were called testes, or the diminutive form testiculi, because they constituted the proof, the "witnesses", of his manhood – the penis was not proof, since eunuchs and little boys had those. In ancient Rome only men were legal adults, and a woman in the law courts had to have a male relative to speak for her; thus their word for "witness" naturally was masculine.

Yours sincerely,
VICTORIA SOLT DENNIS,

Gillingham, Kent.

Sir,

Philip Roe (1088) seems to think there is only one, masculine, Latin word for penis, when in fact there are many of all genders. As well as feminine euphemisms – coda (tail), columna (water-spout), and sicula (small dagger) – there are the feminine nouns mentula and (to describe an erect member) verpa. Carl Orff's cantata "Catulli Carmina" features a mixed chorus singing "O tua mentula/ Mentula/ Cupide saliens/ Penipeniculus/ Velus pisciculus".

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW,

Walthamstow.

"I thought, to hell with the fusty old nude calendar. This year, let's make some cakes and jams...!"

A Rose by any other name...

Sir,

Remote controller doubts the plausibility of someone called Rosemary being involved in the flower business. What about Bob Flowerdew who presents Gardeners' Question Time?!

Strange what things come to mind while delayed on the Circle Line.

Yours,
MARTIN RADFORD,

Via email.

Derrida made simple

Sir,

As the illustrator of the international best-seller Introducing Postmodernism (Icon Books), advertised in last week's Pseuds Corner, can I assure any readers of the last 16 pages of the book (revised post 9/11) that the questions raised in your merry satire are in fact serious and timely ones, dealt with concisely and clearly by Richard Appignanesi. The context for these questions is laid out with equal clarity in the earlier part of the book; Appignanesi provides a summary ***and*** *critique of the often perplexing offerings from Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard (re question 1), Jean Francois Lyotard's (pause for Francophobic laughter) The Postmodern Condition (re question 2), and Francis Fukyama, the Neo-Con author of The End of History and close adviser to Bush, (question 3).*

Provocative? Yes. Pretentious? Non.

Yours sincerely,
CHRIS GARRATT,

Isles of Scilly.

Missing The Point

Sir,

We refer to your article in Eye 1088 regarding "How PFI Works".

You state "The Point was designed by celebrated architect Sir Richard Rogers for property developers Chelsfield." The architect is in fact Terry Farrell & Partners. We would be grateful if you could correct this in your next issue.

Many thanks,
VICTORIA CAMBRIDGE,

On behalf of Richard Rogers Partnership.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"This morning he [Marcus Trescothick] has more or less left off where he carried on yesterday afternoon."
MICHAEL ATHERTON
(David Pendlebury)

"Pompey need to open Bolton's can of defensive thinking..."
SAM MATTAFACE, Quay Radio
(Joseph Clapton-Brewer)

"Maine Road was a great football stadium but as time moved on it stayed where it is..."
KEVIN KEEGAN, ITV
(David Gibbens)

"Chris Porter scored his first league goal last week, and he's done the same this week."
JEFF STELLING, Sky Sports
(Tim Emanuel)

"Del Piero, danger oozing from every vessel in his body..."
Commentator, Radio 5 Live
(Carl Puttnam)

Slatkin salute

Sir,

I don't know a huge amount about Leonard Slatkin's career, but for Mr O'Boulez to imply (Music and Musicians, Eye 1088) that he is of lesser gravitas than Andrew Davis is perhaps a little disingenuous.

Ask most people what they remember of Sir Andrew's tenure at the Proms and they will most likely tell you of his blatant attempts to endear himself to the audience and indeed the BBC through humorous Last Night speeches with sub-Flanders and Swann songs woven in. Slatkin's perceived lesser popularity stems from two facts: he is American and he doesn't engage in sickening sycophancy with the promenaders.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that his speeches at the Last Night in September 2001, days after the terrorist attacks, were moving and dignified and perfectly captured the mood of the moment. The promenaders are a clean and good-natured lot and it would be a great shame if they were to forget his important contribution at that dreadful time.

Yours sincerely,
FRANCIS R. FOX,

Norfolk.

Some landslide

Sir,

Michael Blench (1087) writes in gushing praise of Kevin Curran's "landslide victory" in the GMB general-secretary election, claiming it illustrates grassroots support. Nothing could be further from the truth. Curran secured only 60,000 votes: fewer than 10 percent of the membership – as pointed out by Blackleg shortly after the election.

Yours faithfully,
MAUREEN STORER,

Leicestershire.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

I CORRECTED THE SPELLING MISTAKES.
CAESAR GREETED WITH CHEERS
WHAT SPELLING MISTAKES?
CAESAR GREETED WITH CHEERS
THEY SPELT CHEERS WITH A 'J'
CAESAR GREETED WITH CHEERS

LUVVIES

Q: What have been your most memorable London meals?

EM: Mezzo with (producer) Stephen Evans. He suggested champagne to cure my hangover. He then asked if I could write a treatment for Lorna Sage's Bad Blood. Afterwards I vomited copiously outside Our Price. It was a prelapsarian moment, but now seems quite portentous.

EMILY MORTIMER
ES Magazine

Letter from **Port-au-Prince**

from Our Own Correspondent

OUR president Jean-Bertrand Aristide has just celebrated his 50th birthday. And to make sure there was no black magic to spoil the party, he has legalised voodoo alongside Catholicism and the many Protestant sects active here in Haiti.

Voodoo has never been officially recognised before, not even under "Papa Doc" Duvalier, who would dress in a white suit and top hat and receive people in his bathtub as Baron Samedi, the evil spirit of voodoo. Since its official recognition, couples have been married or had their children baptised at voodoo ceremonies, despite the protests of our Catholic archbishop, Monsignor Joseph Lafontant.

The Catholic hierarchy has always been uneasy about Mr Aristide. It was unhappy when he was a young "liberation theology" priest; it did not like him leaving the church to pursue a political career; and it was very unhappy when he got married and had children. But even our president's staunchest supporters admit he has changed a lot, with or without the help of voodoo.

He has built himself a luxury residence in the suburb of Tabarre, from which he rarely emerges. And though the officially-sponsored banners celebrating his birthday still use his affectionate 'Titide nickname, his opponents dismiss him as the "baron of Tabarre" who rules in an increasingly autocratic fashion.

He could take lessons in this from our departing US ambassador, Dean Curran, who left in high dudgeon at the end of July after what he says were "three years of deception". He has always claimed the 2000 elections which brought Aristide back to power were rigged and says nothing has been done about it. The ambassador and opposition are also angry after politicians and foreign dignitaries were attacked as they tried to bring their "caravan of hope" to one of the capital's worst slums, Cité Soleil: a stinking hole by the port where some 50,000 people live not far from the US embassy.

But what has chiefly been exercising Mr Curran and his staff is their own safety. Port-au-Prince airport is known to be one of the least safe in the world, and the poverty in Haiti is so great that the United States is extremely worried the next terrorist target could be its embassy.

Goons patrol the perimeter and others take down licence plate numbers of any car that stops nearby. But these security measures do not extend much beyond the embassy area.

Elsewhere in the capital and other cities power battles rage between police and armed gangs for control of cocaine smuggling. In the past year two of Aristide's police chiefs, and the force's official spokesman, have fled abroad only a few weeks after taking up their posts, claiming they feared for their lives.

One of the most notorious alleged drug-smugglers, Jacques Ketant, currently in jail in the US, is said to be spilling the beans on our government's involvement in drugs money-laundering. No one knows how much truth there is in his allegations, but there have been several arrests thanks to him "cooperating fully" with the DEA in New York.

In addition to the drugs violence, everyone here is aware that someone – we know not whom – has decided the best way to clean up the streets is to shoot first and not bother with questions. Petty criminals, car hijackers and burglars have all been found shot dead in the night. It seems the thugs who under the Duvaliers were known as the *tontons macoute*, and under the 1990s military regime as the FRAPH, are back.

They now go under the poetic name of the *chimeres* – the mythological monster with the head of a lion and tail of a snake. But these *chimeres* operate in the dark, and are striking terror into the population. The opposition says they are in the pay of the government, the government claims they are common thugs. Either way, few people go out at night unless they have some voodoo protection.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

O The Latest Revolution in Home Test Kits! Do you suffer from the nightmare of suspicions caused by the infidelity of a cheating spouse? Find out 'what's really going on' the quick way, with the CheckMate Infidelity Test Kit.

How does the infidelity test kit work? During and after sexual intercourse, semen is deposited on various personal items. These deposited bodily fluids remain as dried stains on unwashed articles for many years (remember Clinton?), and CheckMate works by simply detecting and identifying these traces of dried semen.

Why use the CheckMate semen detection test kit? It's the newest way to deal with one of the world's oldest problems. There is simply no other way to get this much information about your partner so quickly and easily, for so little time, effort, or money.

Where should I look for evidence? Your partner's undergarments would be the most probable place to start your investigation. Other

common articles are things like sheets, blankets, car seats, pyjamas, clothing, and furniture. Just put a few drops of the enzymatic-sensitive fluid onto any suspicious stains, rub with blotting paper, and bingo! A purple stain reveals the presence of dried semen for days, even months after the event. And better still, CheckMate leaves no tell-tale stain on the garment itself.

Hopefully they're not cheating! Imagine how many relationships have been damaged or destroyed because someone jumped to the wrong conclusion after discovering a suspicious stain. CheckMate changes all that. Now you can put your mind at ease with this inexpensive, easy home test kit. Test 10 articles for only $2.95.

Be the first to know instead of the last with CheckMate. *(Advertisement for CheckMate. Spotter: Julie Allsopp)*

—O—

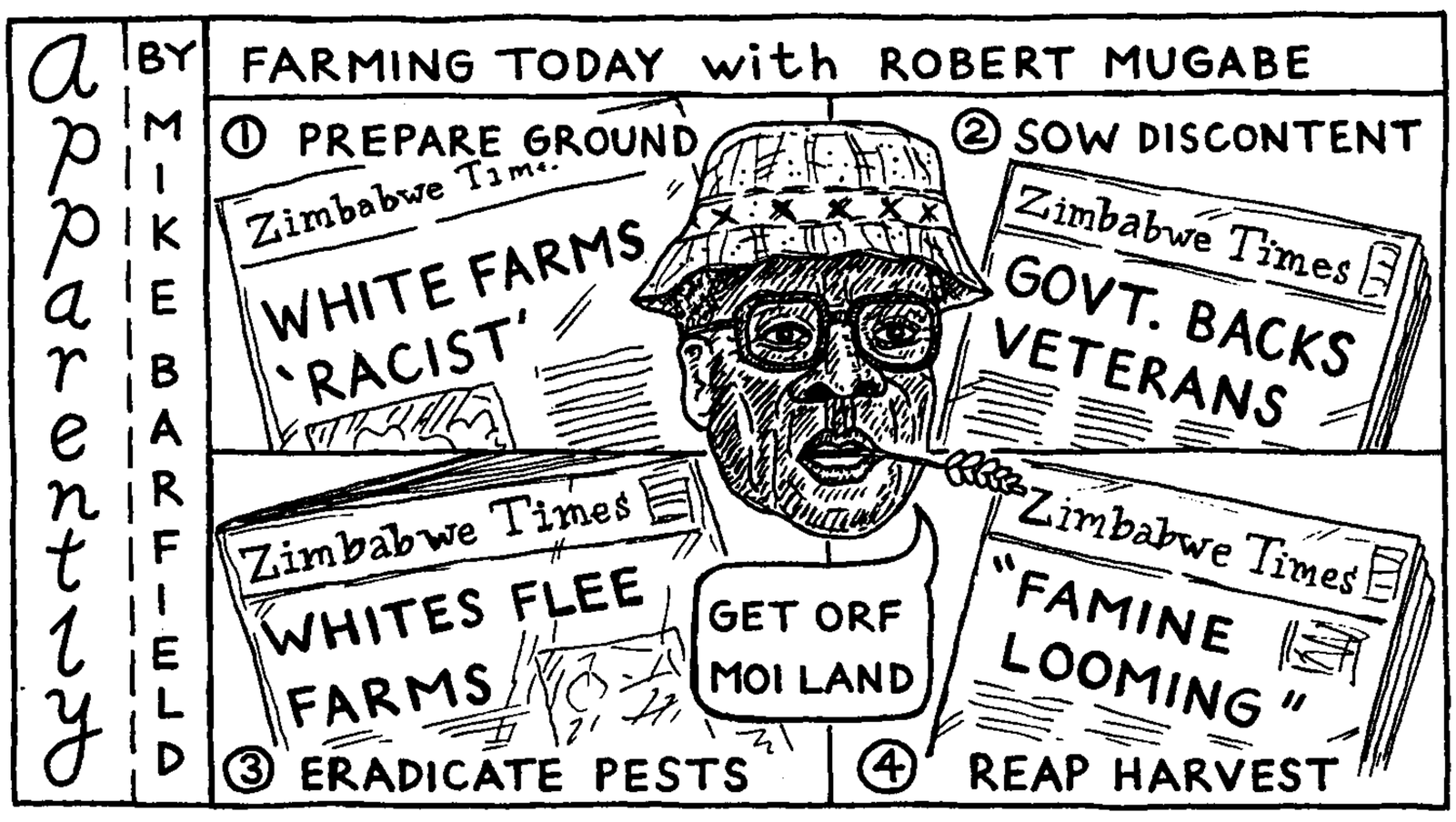
O *"The impact of the Human Rights Act on schools has been considerable since it came into effect in October 2000," solicitor Simon Whitbourn explains in his new book, "because some families have tried to use it to defend the disruptive behaviour of their children. For example, when one school confiscated a child's boa constrictor, on the grounds that 'no pets are allowed into school,' the child's father sought legal redress under the Act. His grievance was that the snake was not a pet, rather a part of his wife's somewhat exotic stage act.*

"In another case, legal action was taken after a secondary school refused to admit a boy who had semi-permanently tattooed the word 'THUG' across his own forehead. Although, in reality, as he had done the tattoo in the mirror, it actually said 'GUHT.' Fortunately, neither of the above claims ultimately proved successful, but schools might have problems punishing pupils because of Article 10 of the Act, which guarantees freedom of expression." (Times Educational Supplement, 15/8/03. Spotter: David Sawyer)

—O—

O "In 1990, my client began a legal action in the courts," a Dutch solicitor told reporters in Amsterdam, "arguing that the Tilburg municipal council should repay him for the money he spends on sex with prostitutes. He is physically handicapped, and claimed that regular visits to sex workers give him peace and relaxation, which means that he has to use less medicine. In 1997, a Breda court ruling agreed with him, and allowed him to start claiming a maximum repayment of EUR 125 each month from the council, for any sexual favours he receives from prostitutes.

"However, my client has subsequently been unable to find any prostitutes willing to offer him their services. This is not because of his physical handicap, but because he needs a receipt from the women for their favours, including condoms and Viagra, so that he can present it to the city's social services department. However, he has discovered that prostitutes only want to work for 'black' money that does not need to be declared as taxable income to the government, and giving him a receipt would mean that they would need to declare 'services given.' So unless social services allow him to start claiming without producing receipts, he will continue to require more medicine, and that costs the council more than EUR 500 each month." *(Radio Netherlands, 8/8/03. Spotter: Geoff Wicks)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

As all of you who were in church on Sunday will know, it is exactly two years since our good friend the Rev. Dubya launched his great crusade against the evil one.

We had a two-minute silence to commemorate all those who have lost their jobs as a result, including Mr Cook, Mrs Short, Mr Meacher and the editor of this newsletter, Mr Campbell.

I know many of you will be wondering whether there is another name which will soon have to be added to this list – I mean, of course, our good friend Mr Hoon, who runs the parish shooting club in the basement under the Carphone Warehouse in the High Street.

In recent months, when we have had so many problems to contend with, no one has done more to support our battle to defeat the forces of darkness than Mr Hoon.

Whatever I asked him to do, he did. But unfortunately, in his eagerness to please and to serve the parish, he did one or two things which, I want to emphasise, I did not know anything about at all.

(Actually I haven't quite gone yet and if you want to know the real story about all this see my forthcoming memoirs, *Behind The Scenes At The Vicarage*, by Alastair Campbell, serialisation rights still available! A.C.).

When Mr Hoon decided at a meeting in my study at the vicarage to put a notice in the church porch revealing the name of our much-loved local GP Dr Kelly, I want to emphasise that I was in no way present.

At the time when the decision was taken, I had momentarily left the room in order to answer a call of nature (even vicars have to spend "the occasional

penny", you know!).

By the time I returned to the meeting, the decision had been made, and the discussion had moved on to other items on the agenda, without anyone mentioning to me what had been decided by Mr Hoon in my absence.

Unfortunately, when Mr Hoon was asked about this later, he was not altogether truthful. In fact, I would have to be completely frank and admit that he misled the parish (and indeed misled me!).

Of course, he did this for the most understandable of motives (ie, to keep his job!). But what kind of a world would it be, if we all told lies in order to keep our jobs?

(For a full answer, don't miss *Behind The Scenes At The Vicarage* by Alastair Campbell, some foreign rights still available! A.C.)

I have gone out of my way to help Geoff. But in the end you cannot help a sick and confused man who cannot tell the difference between fact and fiction!

Of course, it would be quite improper to come to any conclusions about Mr Hoon's behaviour, or the level of blame which should be attached to him for the death of Dr Mitty.

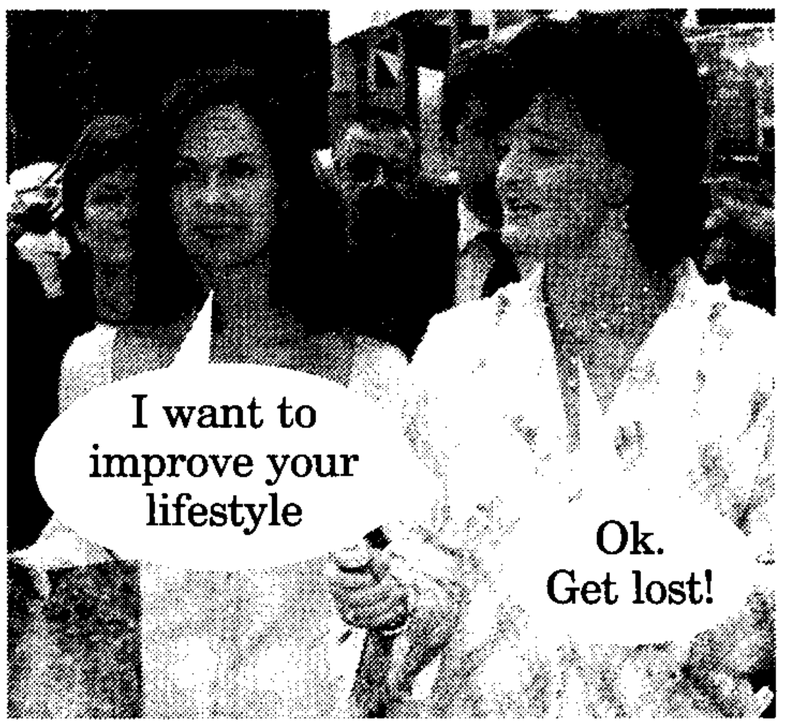
For that we must wait for Mr Hutton to find him guilty and to suggest that he should resign, so that he can wander through the deserts of this world looking for redemption and weapons of mass destruction!

(For the true, horrific story see Chapter 7 in my forthcoming best-seller, *Behind The Scenes At The Vicarage.* A.C.)

Yours,

Tony

Ali Campbell's Smile-Awhile



This weeks winner of the photo bubble competition is Fiona Millar (no relation). Well done Fiona! A.C.

Good buy!

As I've already mentioned I am about to leave this job and I just wanted to say that my forthcoming best-seller ***Behind The Scenes At The Vicarage*** *is a very good buy indeed! May I just say good riddance to everyone left in the parish. A.C.*

An Important Announcement From The New Committee Of The St Albion's Working Men's Club

We are second-to-none in our admiration for all that the Vicar has done for the parish since he came in, and we would like to thank our comrade Mr Prescott for all he has done for us over the years, trying to put across our view to the Vicar and his toffee-nosed middle-class mates on the PCC.

However, be that so ever as it may. It is time for us to remind Mr so-called Blair, just who it is who is the piper who pays the tune, when it comes to the bottom line of financial contributions to parish funds.

Wouldn't it be nice if just occasionally the Vicar would show some small sign of appreciation, as is only right and proper, for our generosity which is of course given freely, no strings attached.

Nevertheless, we would like to suggest to him that none of us here would say no to an invitation to drop round at the vicarage for a nice glass of ice-cold Chardonnay and a smoked salmon sandwich, so that we could put our feelings to the Vicar about a whole tranche of topics (and I know some of the lads wouldn't mind a few quiet words with that tasty Carole Caplin, though you can leave her mum behind, that old baggage!).

Anyway, the basic message is, to get down to brass roots, we want a bigger say in what goes on in this parish than what we've got now, so the Vicar had better look smartish and start playing the game or else we won't be paying up.

And may we remind the Vicar that since most of his rich mates seem now to be on the way to the slammer, ie Mr Hinduja and his colleague Mr Hinduja, that very soon he will be needing a few working class blokes to bail him out.

Signed by
Representatives of the following trade unions
COMICUS KFC FCUK
NBG COCKUP ETC

● I am very pleased to welcome the increasing participation in parish affairs of my good friends from the Working Men's Club, with whom I recently enjoyed a very pleasant evening when they were on their annual coach trip to Brighton. I was able to tell them over dinner at Wheeler's (special thanks to Mr Gilchrist for picking up the bill for £13,500, which he said his members would be only too happy to pay) that I will be giving them regular space in this newsletter to air their views, so that everyone can see how worthwhile they are, or not! T.B.

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

As a former member of the PCC, I know for an ABSOLUTE FACT that the Vicar's friend, Rev. Dubya, deliberately blew up the Twin Towers HIMSELF, so that he could have an excuse to launch his so-called Moral Crusade against millions of innocent people AND I have proof the Vicar knew all along that the Rev. Dubya was FOOLING THE WORLD along with his friend N. Ron Hubbard of the Church of Accountology.

Yours sincerely,
M. Meacher, Nutwood, Barking Road.

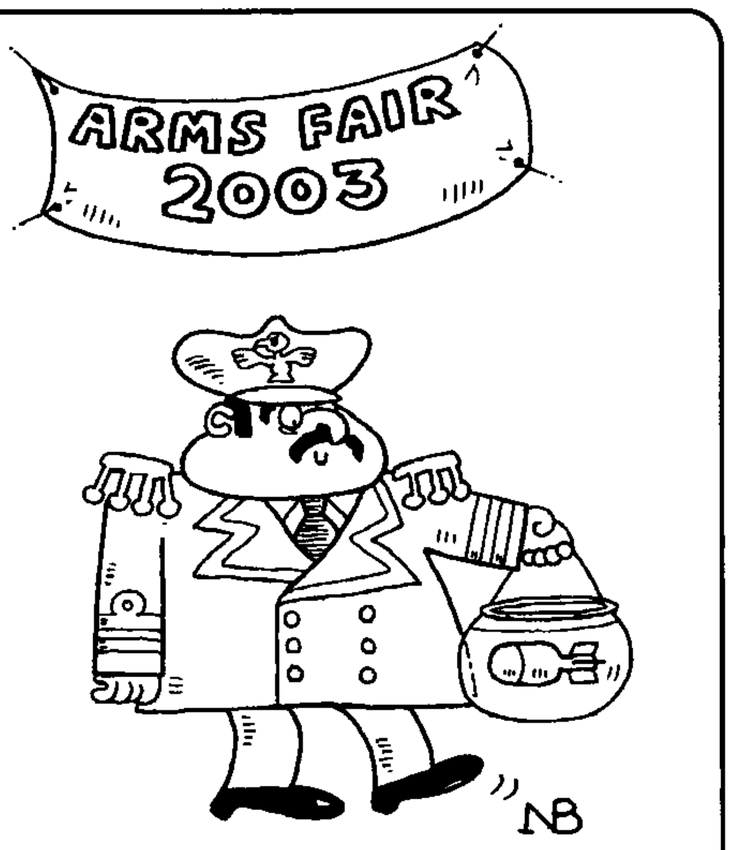
Message From Rev. Dubya of the Church of the Latter-Day Morbombs

Be not deceived by the forces of Satanity! The Evil One appears in many guises – sometimes spelling his name with a 'Q' and sometimes changing it to an 'N' just to deceive the unwary. But I know what he's up to. 'Iraq' yesterday, 'Iran' today – but he don't fool me!

I take a leaf out of the old story of Armageddon in the *Book of Revelatitude (66.6)*: "There shall come a Pale Rider and his name shall be Clint. And he shall wreak terrible vengeance and lay waste the earth."

So, go on Iranland – make my day!!!

Yours in the last days,
Rev. Dubya



All The Fun Of The Fair!

The Annual St Albion's Arms Fair was concluded yesterday with a grand finale that saw a local man walk away with 1st Prize in the Rocket-Propelled Pineapple Grenade Class. Once again, the raffle proved a great success, and all proceeds raised will go towards developing a special laser-guided weapons system for our needy friends over in Africa! Thanks to all who attended! T.B.

The New Balanced And Fair Today Programme

Jim Naughtie *(for it is he)*: ...Mr Straw, how very good of you to come to the studio when you must be so busy.

Jack Straw: Good morning, Jim.

Naughtie: Is there anything you'd like to share with the listeners this morning?

Straw: The new EU constitution is not really a consitution at all. Its only purpose is to give countries back their powers. It is a great and historic opportunity for us to streamline the procedures to make them more democratic as the community enlarges to... Hang on – Mr Naughtie, I've been speaking for over 30 seconds and you haven't interrupted me once. Is there something wrong?

Naughtie: I was just making you a cup of tea. Would you like a biscuit? And would you like to tell us how useless the Tories are in opposing your plans?

Straw: How grateful I am that you have not asked me any questions about Mr Blair telling lies, or indeed my requests for some killer facts to be included in the dossier...

Naughtie: Oh, do go on. I'm so enjoying our little chat. But you were going to have a go at Duncan Smith, weren't you?

Straw: Is there time for that? Surely you've got to come in on me there and say "That's all we've got time for"?

Naughtie: No, no, Foreign Secretary, you carry on, as long as you like. No one wants to listen to the news or the weather or Start The Week when they can hear you.

Straw: Er...

Naughtie: That's fascinating, Mr Straw. So if you've really got nothing more to add, perhaps we should move on to Thought For The Day with Father Gregory Dyke of the White City Friars.

Dyke *(for it is he)*: You know, it's awfully easy, isn't it, to criticise the government. But shouldn't we be trying to see both sides of the story? Wasn't it our Lord Reith who said *(cont'd. BBC 94)*

The Tale Of The Three Little Porkies

ONCE upon a time, there was a big, bad, lifestyle guru who turned up outside the brick house where the three Blairs lived. There was Daddy Blair, Mummy Blair and little Leo Blair. "Mrs Blair," cried the big, bad, former topless model. "Mrs Blair, please let me in. I have a new lipstick that will make you look really pretty. And a shirt for you, Mr Blair, that won't show the sweat under your arms."

But the three Blairs hid under the table and pretended not to be in.

Then the big, bad New Age enthusiast got very angry and said, "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow the gaffe on you!".

"Ooh!" cried Daddy Blair, "I'm really scared. Tell her to go away."

But this just made the big, bad, former mistress of the Australian conman even more determined to get into the house.

"I'm going to blow you all away," she screamed, "with my new book which I'm going to sell for millions of pounds."

"No, no," cried all the Blairs together. "We won't let you in. Not by the hairs on Mr Blunkett's chinny-chin-chin."

Then the big, bad daughter of the mad, psychic soothsayer climbed down the chimney in her wolf-skin tracksuit and gobbled them all up because they had forgotten to light the fire.

© *Madonna 2003.*

SWEDES SAY 'NEJ' TO BLAIR

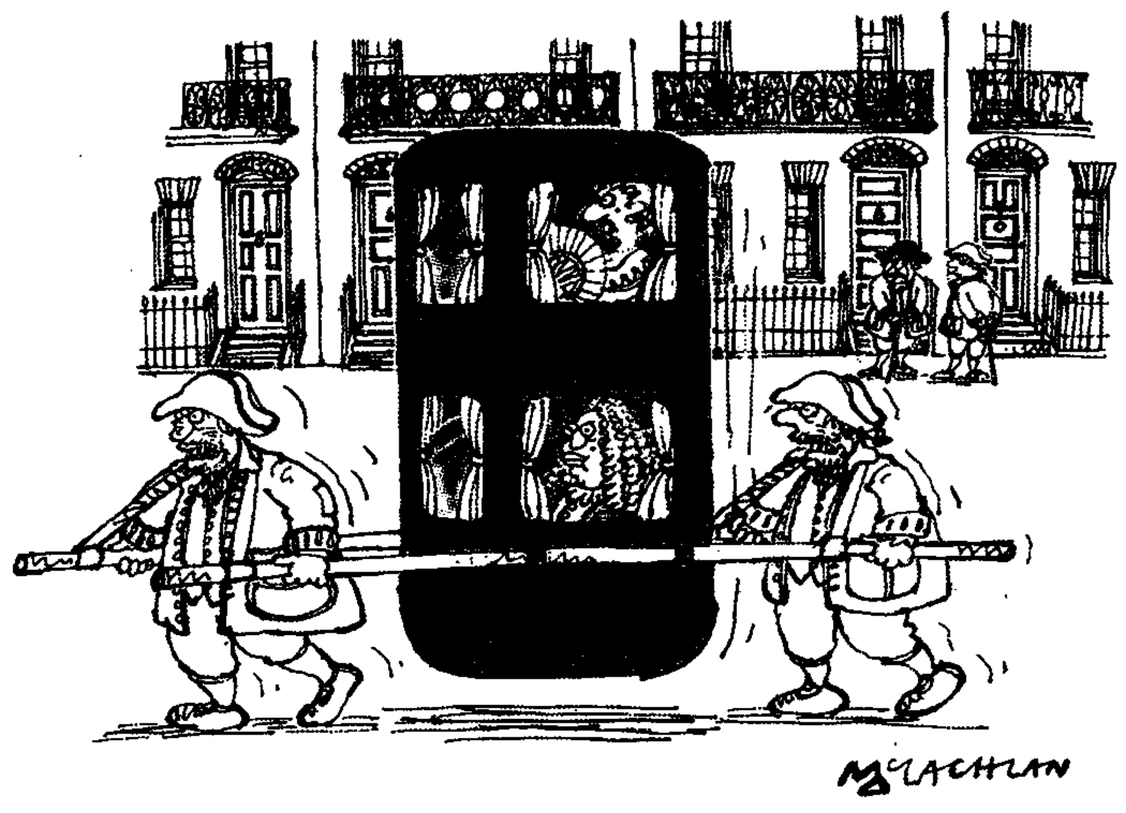
by Our Political Staff
Lunchtime .O'Laf

THE PLUCKY Swedes have finally given Blair the thumbs down when they told him where he could stuff his euro!!

The effect of their brave anti-euro vote was immediate.

Overnight, the Swedish economy surged, the Krona went through the roof, crime stopped completely, a new hospital opened every ten minutes, Swedish schoolchildren got 17 A* A-Levels each, and Sweden won the World Cup. But most significantly of all for Blair's doomed government, Swedish house prices increased by a staggering 200% and they are *still* going up.

As one delighted 'nej' voter told me, "Yesterday, my house was worthless. Today, I am a billionaire!".



"They'll never catch on here in London"

THAT ABORTED WORLD TRADE DEAL IN FULL

■ WE THE undersigned countries agree that:

1. The rich will get richer.
2. The poor will get poorer.
3. Er...
4. Sign this or else.

A Tank Driver Writes

Each week a well-known tank driver is invited to give his views on the Middle Eastern situation.

THIS WEEK: **Ari Sharon**
(Tank No. PZ 742X)

That Arafat, guv?! It's all his fault, this crisis, innit? Why isn't he stopping it? What's he up to? Bugger all – excuse my Hebrew – that's what!!

Do you know what I'd do with that Arafat, if I had my way (which I do)?

I'd train a special squad of Mossad hitmen to go over the wall (which we've built) and string him up!! It's the only language he understands.

I had that Barbara Amiel in the back of the tank once. Wonderful looking woman for her age...

Reprinted from the Jerusalem edition of Tanks & Tankmen *(prop. Lord Black of Crossfire).*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam

So. Farewell
Then
Johnny Cash.

Famous country
Singer.

Yes, you were
Known as the
Man In Black.

Were I to
Attend your
Funeral,
I too would
Be the Man
In Black.

But Tennessee is
A long way
From Tooting.

And Ryan Air
Do not
Fly there.

E.J. Thribb (aged 17½)

PS: Apologies to
Leni Riefenstahl

For not writing a
Threnody,
Or a Thribbody
As they are known,
On the occasion
Of her death.

"The Woman In Black
Shirt".

Yes, that would have
Been a good title.

Or perhaps I
Should have used
It for Lady
Diana Mosley.

What You Didn't Bother To Read Because You've Read It All Before

'MY NAUGHTY NIGHTS WITH TOP PLAYWRIGHT HAROLD PINTER'

By Joan Bonkwell

Chapter One

I SHALL never forget the time I first met Harold Pinter, the world's most brilliant writer and nor will you because you've read about it so often.

Harold dazzled me with his menacing silences and his incredible way with words:

'I want *(pause)* to *(pause)* be on Late Night Line-Up *(pause)* with you," he said.

How could I resist? Within minutes we were engaged in passionate discussions about his latest play.

We couldn't stop ourselves, even though both Harold and I were married and we were both incredibly boring *(cont. p. 94)*

Tomorrow: How I hated being called 'The Thinking Man's Crumpet'.

Extracted from *'The Thinking Man's Crumpet – The Joan Bonkwell Story'* by Joan Bonkwell *(BBC Press £18.99)*

Serialisation Of Another Book You Don't Want To Read

'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH – MY PART IN ITS DOWNFALL'

By Boris Johnson

Chapter One

CRIKEY! A whole book to fill!? Ooh-er!!! A lot of words, eh??! Blimey! Still, lashings of spondoolees for me and Mrs B. if old Borrie pulls its off! So give it a go, what?

Chapter Two

EUROPE. A big place full of foreigners all speaking a weird lingo. Froggies, wops, dagos – the whole bally shower, including brother Hun. Very rum place indeed. Cripes! Give me Henley any day.

Tomorrow: More of this stuff.

© *The Beano.*

Yet Another Serialisation Of A Book To Fill Up The Pages

'I WAS MONTY'S PYTHON'

By The Parrot Team

Chapter One

I'LL never forget the day we wrote the famous Dead Python sketch. Graham, John, Eric and I were all sitting in the BBC Canteen and Terry said, "Would anyone like a cup of tea?" and within minutes the greatest sketch ever written had found its way into the History of Comedy *(continued for 940 pages)*

ON OTHER PAGES

● 'Why I've Been Getting Pissed And Trying To Pick Up Dim Totty In Annabel's For The Last Four Hundred Years' by **Taki Takupalotofspas** 15-16

POLLY FILLER

EXCUSE ME for asking, but what exactly is so remarkable about David Blaine?

A man sits around doing nothing for 44 days and expects everyone to applaud him. Ring any bells, girls? Remind you of anyone you live with?

I mentioned this to the useless Simon but couldn't elicit any response due to the fact that he was slumped in front of the television watching 24-hour coverage of David Blaine(!) on the Sky Extreme Boredom Channel with continuous commentary from Paul Ross and expert opinion from A.A. Gill!

And I see that David Blaine is wearing a nappy. Doesn't that just say it all? Men are **all** big babies with exhibitionist tendencies.

I was tempted, on behalf of the women in Britain, to go and throw an egg at him!

But if he's anything like the useless Simon, he wouldn't know what to do with an egg! He would probably put it in the microwave, just like he did with toddler Charlie's wet football boots, which resulted in the kitchen catching fire!

Needless to say, the hopeless new Liberian au pair panicked and threw the goldfish bowl over the flames, thus killing Moby! (My amusing name for the fish, by the way – Charlie wanted to call him "Fishy"!)

Honestly, these girls. You would have thought that coming from Monrovia she would have seen the odd house on fire recently and would know what to do! But not a bit of it!

ANYWAY, Mr Blaine, when you come down from lying around in your silly box, if you want to see something truly amazing, come and watch me performing the incredible daily balancing act on the tightrope of career and motherhood!

Now that *is* magic!

© *Polly Filler*

EXCLUSIVE TO THE DAILY MAIL

Latest Polls – TERRIBLE NEWS FOR BLAIR

THE latest opinion poll reveals that in the wake of the devastating Hutton Inquiry, Labour has increased its lead over the Tories by 5 points *(Surely the other way round? Ed.)* and that Iain Duncan Smith's personal ratings have plummeted to a new low *(surely "high"? Ed)* meaning a Tory leadership challenge is almost certain this Spring, which couldn't be worse news for the embattled IDS... *(This is hopeless, you're Sacked. Ed)*.

PRIMARY ASSISTANCE - 24 HOUR GLOBAL ASSISTANCE

You must contact Primary Assistance in the event of **You** dying, incurring medical expenses in excess of £500, being involved in an accident, being admitted to hospital or curtailing for medical reasons.

Portman Travel Car Insurance

Film Choice

HIGH HOON

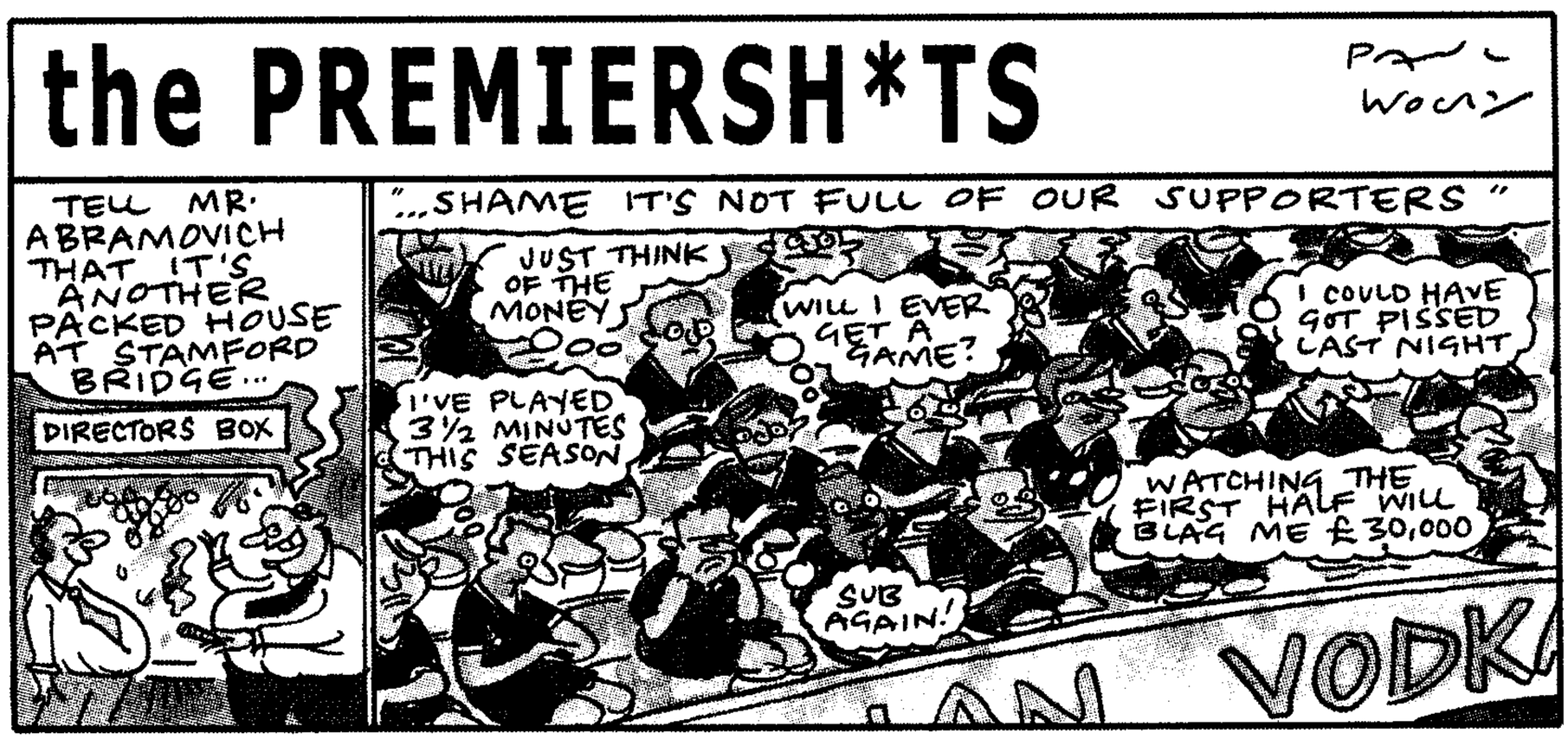
TCM **1.45 am**

CLASSIC cowboy movie where the embattled lawman is waiting to see if he is going to be hanged for turning over Doc Kelly to the gang of vicious journalists. Deserted and doomed, what can he do? Features the haunting theme tune 'Do not forsake me Alastair Darling'.

Eye Rating: Zzzzzzz

Cast In Full

Geoff Hoon . . . . . GARY COOPER
Grace Kelly . . . . . SUSAN WATTS
Andrew Gilligan . . FATTY ARBUCKLE


the PREMIERSH*TS
TELL MR. ABRAMOVICH THAT IT'S ANOTHER PACKED HOUSE AT STAMFORD BRIDGE...
DIRECTORS BOX
"...SHAME IT'S NOT FULL OF OUR SUPPORTERS"
JUST THINK OF THE MONEY
WILL I EVER GET A GAME?
I'VE PLAYED 3½ MINUTES THIS SEASON
I COULD HAVE GOT PISSED LAST NIGHT
WATCHING THE FIRST HALF WILL BLAG ME £30,000
SUB AGAIN!
VODK

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

DAMIEN HIRST

Your new show has been much acclaimed, but critics have noticed that there are no spoons stuck in the cow's head. Is this significant?

Well, that's up to other people, isn't it? It's not the artist's job to dictate to the public what anything means, in whatever context, i.e. in this case the head of a cow. But it could have been anything, the head of a pig, or a shark, or whatever.

But nevertheless there are no spoons?

I can see what you're trying to get at, and it's an interesting point, but I wouldn't make too much of a big deal about it. I mean, the knife is obviously the more appropriate symbol for this work. If it was a cow's head with a lot of spoons sticking out of it, it would just look stupid. The critics would have a field day.

Have you ever thought of putting a spoon in formaldehyde, or casting a giant 15-metre spoon?

You can't ask an artist that kind of thing. Works of art just are. There's no 'can you?' or 'would you?' On the other hand, you can't say it would never happen. I mean, a giant spoon could be amazing. It could really alter the whole way we think of a spoon. Equally, I could stick a whole lot of spoons onto a giant canvas, and that would say the same thing in a different way. Or a different thing the same way.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No, I'm an artist.

NEXT WEEK: Bob Crowe – *"Me and My Crow."*

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

IS THIS THE REAL LORD LUCAN?

IN WHAT is probably the most astonishing scoop the world has seen for decades, Private Eye can reveal that the fugitive peer Lord Lucan has been tracked down to a small office in London's docklands.

For years, it turns out, the missing Earl has been hiding out in the *Sunday Telegraph*, assuming the identity of a leading journalist.

This amazing claim is made in a new book by one of Britain's most respected policemen, the former Inspector 'Knacker of the Yard' Knacker, entitled *'I Made All This Up'* (Conman Press £7.99).

In the book, Knacker describes how he received a tip-off from a reputable drug-dealer, who gave him a photograph of Dominic Lawson which proved beyond any doubt that Lawson and Lucan were one and the same.

Unlucky Lawson

Beyond the startling physical resemblances, other parallels between the two men are too numerous to be mere coincidence:

- **Their names both begin with the letter 'L'**
- **They both had fathers who were Lords**
- **They both have right-wing views**
- **Both of them went to Eton**
- **Both had moustaches, except one of them.**

But the biggest giveaway of all is that Lucan, in his assumed persona as a journalist, went out of his way to publish an absurd story claiming that the real Lucan had become a hippy in Goa, in order to put the world off the scent.

Lucan Latest

WIFE DISMISSES LAWSON STORY

LADY LUCAN today dismissed the Lawson story as "complete and utter nonsense".

"My husband," she said, "was an Englishman of the old school. He would never have stooped so low as to end up editing the *Sunday Telegraph*."

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Those of us who knew 'Bungle Dommy' laughed and laughed when we read your story about how he is meant to be Lord Lucan.

I had the pleasure of knowing 'Dommy' well when he was editing the Spectator, in those far-off days of the swinging Nineties.

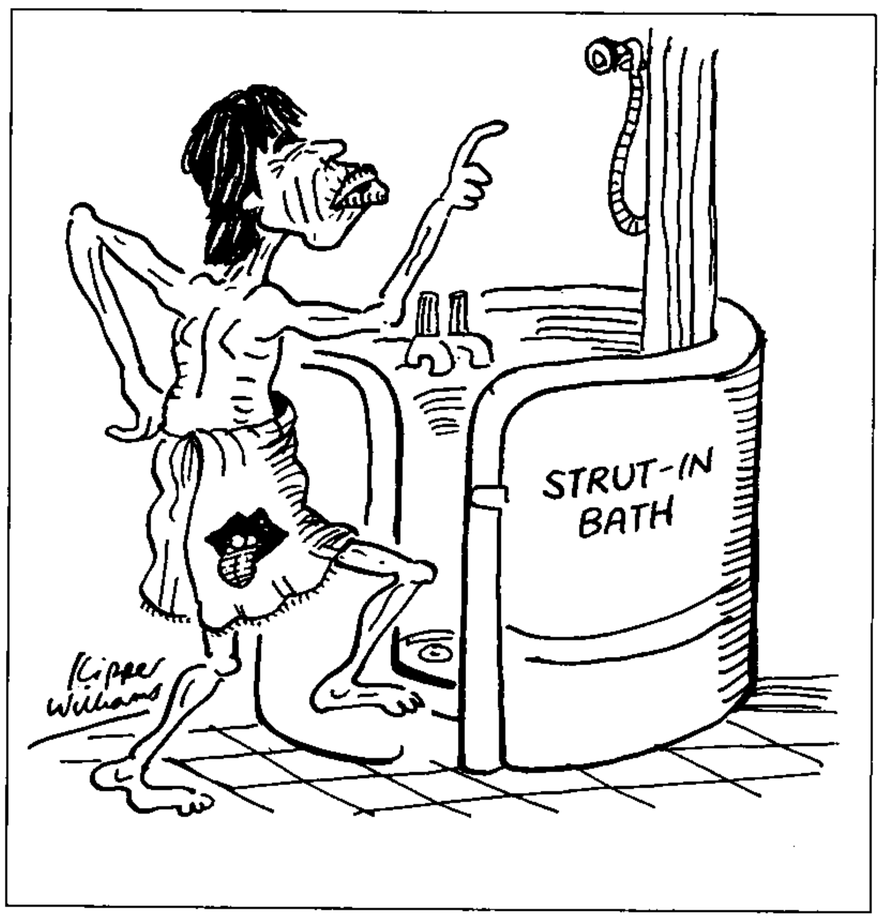
We all used to hang out at a little club called 'the Garrick' – me, Dommy, Chazza Moore, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Borrie Johnson.

Dommy was the life-and-soul of the party, always up for another bottle of claret or seconds of steak-and-kidney. How anyone could think of Dommy murdering his nanny in cold blood and then running away utterly beats me.

Yours,

ALEX CHANCELLOR,

Tuscany.



The course covered the following topics

- *Ensuring a piece makes it's points clearly*
- *Logical arrangements of paragraphs*
- *Understanding house style*
- *Symbols used to mark up text*
- *Common problems of grammer and spelling*

Proofreading course certificate

NEXT WEEK

IS THIS THE REAL SHERGAR?

ALL THE evidence suggests that this fugitive aristocrat is none other than the missing racehorse Shergar.

The broad, noble forehead, the flared nostrils, the shirt and tie can only point to one conclusion. We are so desperate we'll run anything.

IS THIS THE REAL SADDAM HUSSEIN?

STARTLING new evidence has emerged which suggests that the man they call 'Jungle Osama' may in fact be the fugitive dictator Saddam Hussein.

The moustache, the beard and the fact that he promises "death to the west" surely *(That's enough. Ed.)*

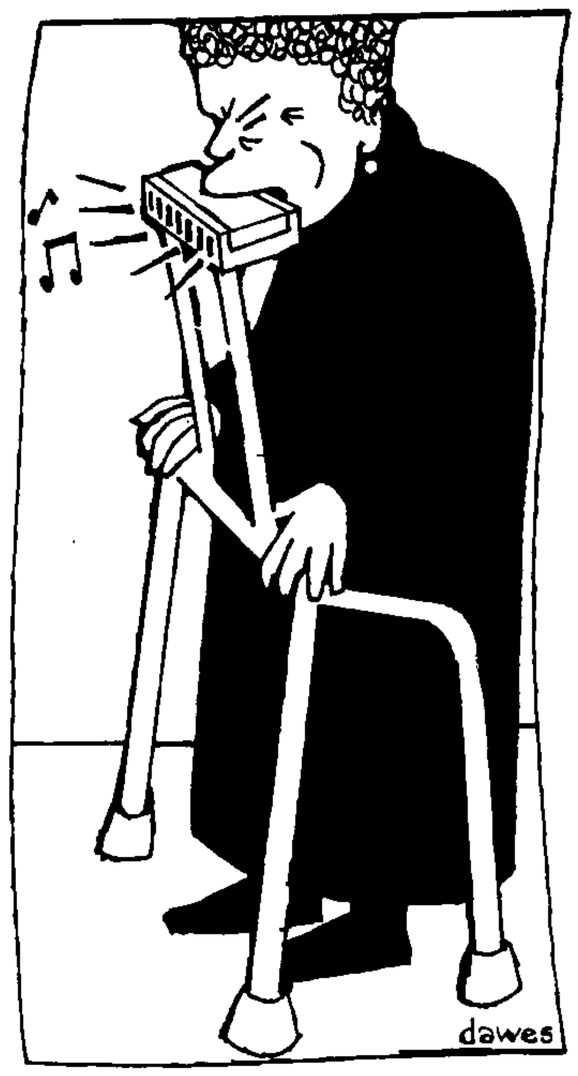
News In Brief

J-LO CALLS OFF PUBLICITY

HOLLYWOOD was reeling today after J-Lo and Ben Affleck announced that they'd postponed their publicity that was due to take place on Sunday.

"J-Lo still desperately wants to get publicised," said a Hollywood insider, "but the last thing she wants is for her publicity to be turned into a media circus."

Sources say J-Lo and Ben Affleck will now be getting publicised later in the year, probably when they've got another film out which *(continued 2004)*



THE ZIMMERMAN FRAME

That Blair/TUC Dinner Menu in full

Lily-liver paté

— ⁂ —

Chicken (with carrot but no stick)

— ⁂ —

Jelly with Cowardy-Custard

To drink

Bottled-out water

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Announcing a new feature to run every day in the Daily Tellygraph

Boobwatch

FOR YEARS the Daily Telegraph has shown a blatant bias in favour of publishing pictures of actresses, models and other young women with protuberant accessories, rather than maintaining a traditional balance by giving equal prominence to photographs of Mr Kevin Nerds, the new general secretary of the trade union ANORAC (the Associated National Organisation of Rod-fitters and Carpeters).

From now on we will be monitoring on a daily basis every example of the bias towards boobs. Readers who spot instances of the Daily Telegraph showing shameless partiality in favour of editorial embonpoint are asked to send them in to Boobwatch, Editor's Office, Daily Hurleygraph, London SE X1.

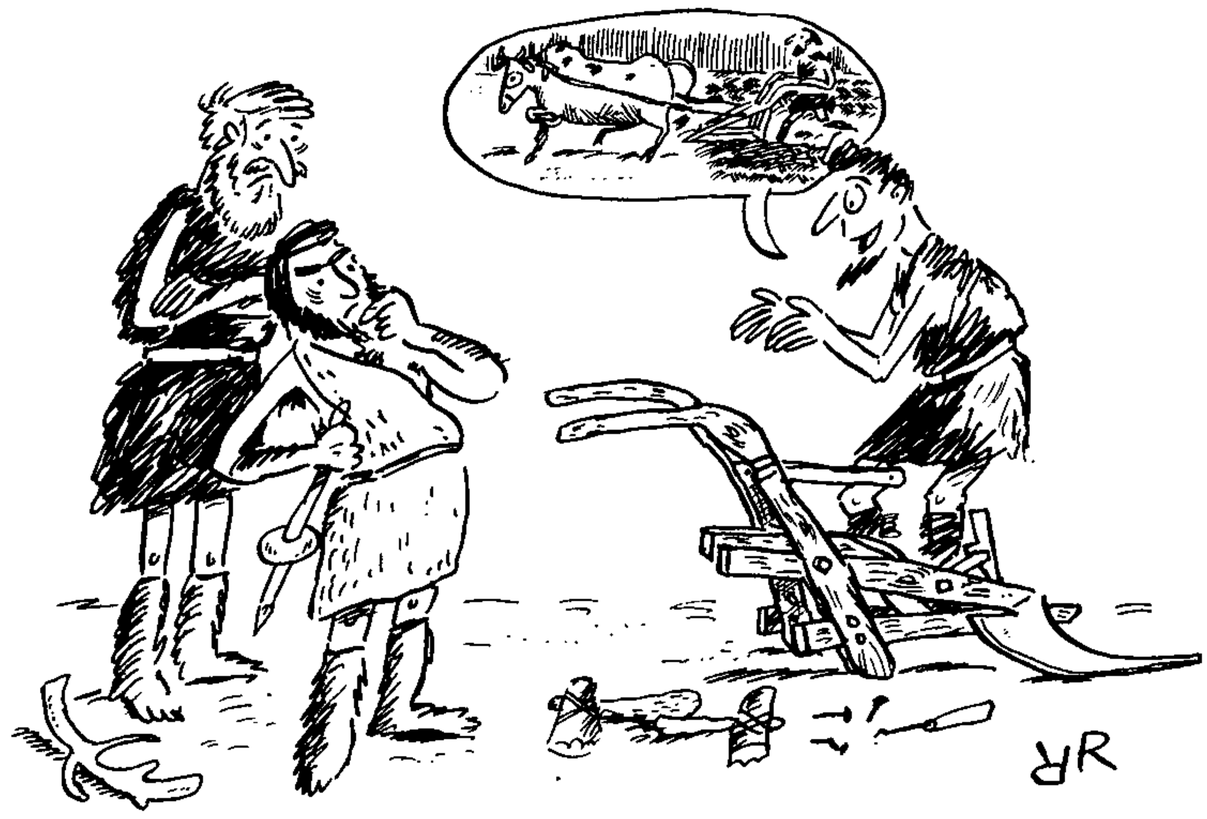
TOMORROW: Borewatch. A new feature asking readers to spot boring pieces by Telegraph hacks sucking up to Barbara Amiel, arguing that the BBC should be bulldozed to the ground and its ringleaders imprisoned.

AN APOLOGY
The England Cricket Team

IN COMMON with all other newspapers, we may in recent weeks have inadvertently given the impression that the England Cricket Team were in some way playing beneath the standard required of an international team. Headlines such as 'England Fail Vital Test', 'Oval and Out' and 'Why Don't You No Hope Losers Go And Shoot Yourselves?' may have contributed to readers misunderstanding the paper's position.

In the light of the fifth test, we now accept that the England squad are a brilliant band of heroes, led by the tactical genius Michael Vaughan, whose all-round performance has rewritten the history books and placed these eleven gods in the pantheon of English cricket.

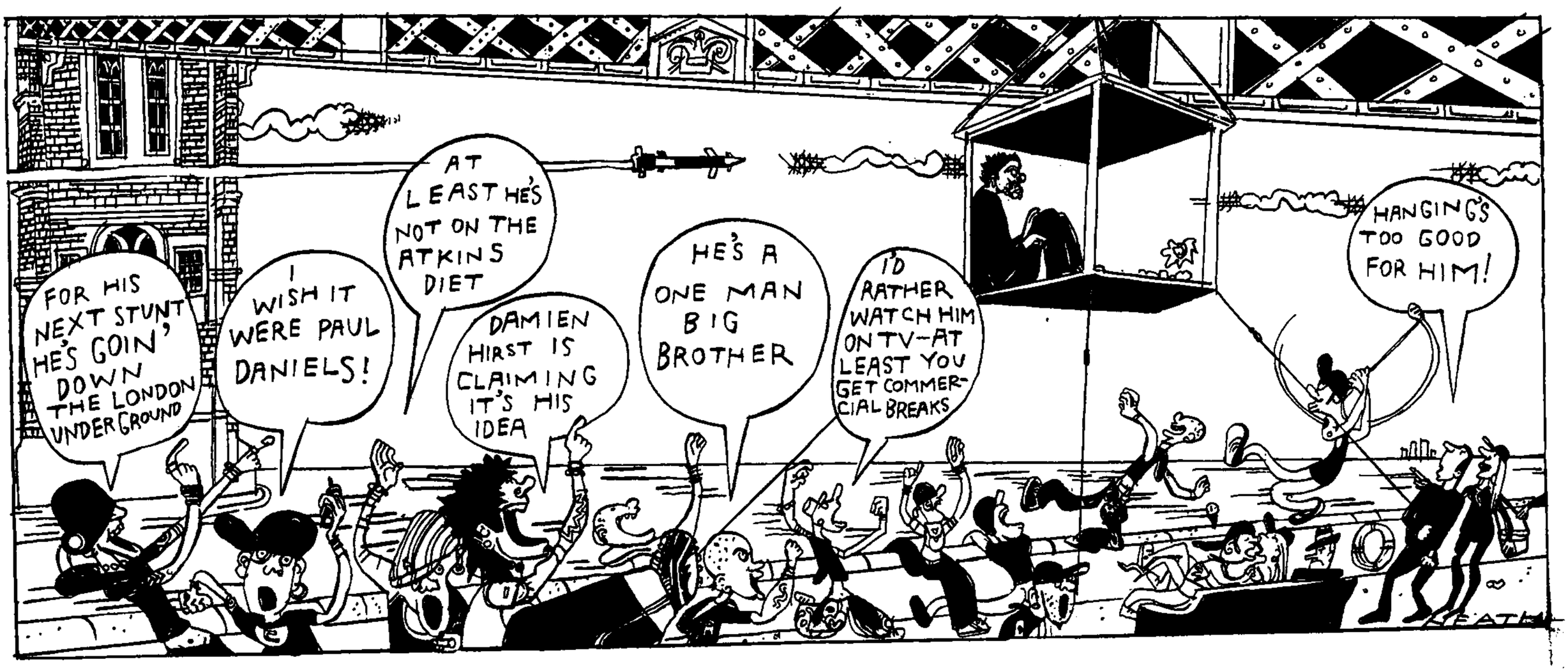
ON OTHER PAGES: 'Why lousy England won't win in Bangladesh' **94**



Ground-breaking Ideas No 0001

Sequel to 'THE TWO TOWERS'
★ NOW ON VIDEO ★

The evil Sarosama returns to attack the fellowship of the Bush


AT LEAST HE'S NOT ON THE ATKINS DIET
I WISH IT WERE PAUL DANIELS!
FOR HIS NEXT STUNT HE'S GOIN' DOWN THE LONDON UNDERGROUND
DAMIEN HIRST IS CLAIMING IT'S HIS IDEA
HE'S A ONE MAN BIG BROTHER
I'D RATHER WATCH HIM ON TV—AT LEAST YOU GET COMMERCIAL BREAKS
HANGING'S TOO GOOD FOR HIM!
HEATH

"We have your daughter – she'll be released when you come and finish our extension"

CROWD TURN ON MASTER ILLUSIONIST

By Our Political Staff **The Great Andrew Marrvo**

THERE WERE ugly scenes yesterday as America's favourite magician, Tony Blaine, became the focus of unwelcome attention from the British people.

As he dangled by a thread high over everyone's heads, he was pelted with eggs and jeered by raucous onlookers.

Over-Egged

"Wake up and do something," cried the crowd, bored by Blaine's inactivity and his concentration on surviving for the next 44 days.

Security men tried to stop protestors, but were unable to prevent a barrage of abuse targeted at David Blair.

Said a spokesman for David Blair, "This wouldn't happen in America where Tony was put on a pedestal by cheering supporters.

"Over there they think he is marvellous. What is wrong with you guys?"

"I didn't say I was bored with you, dear. I said I was bored with the human condition and of course I don't include you in that..."

COUGH DROPS ASYLUM BOMBSHELL

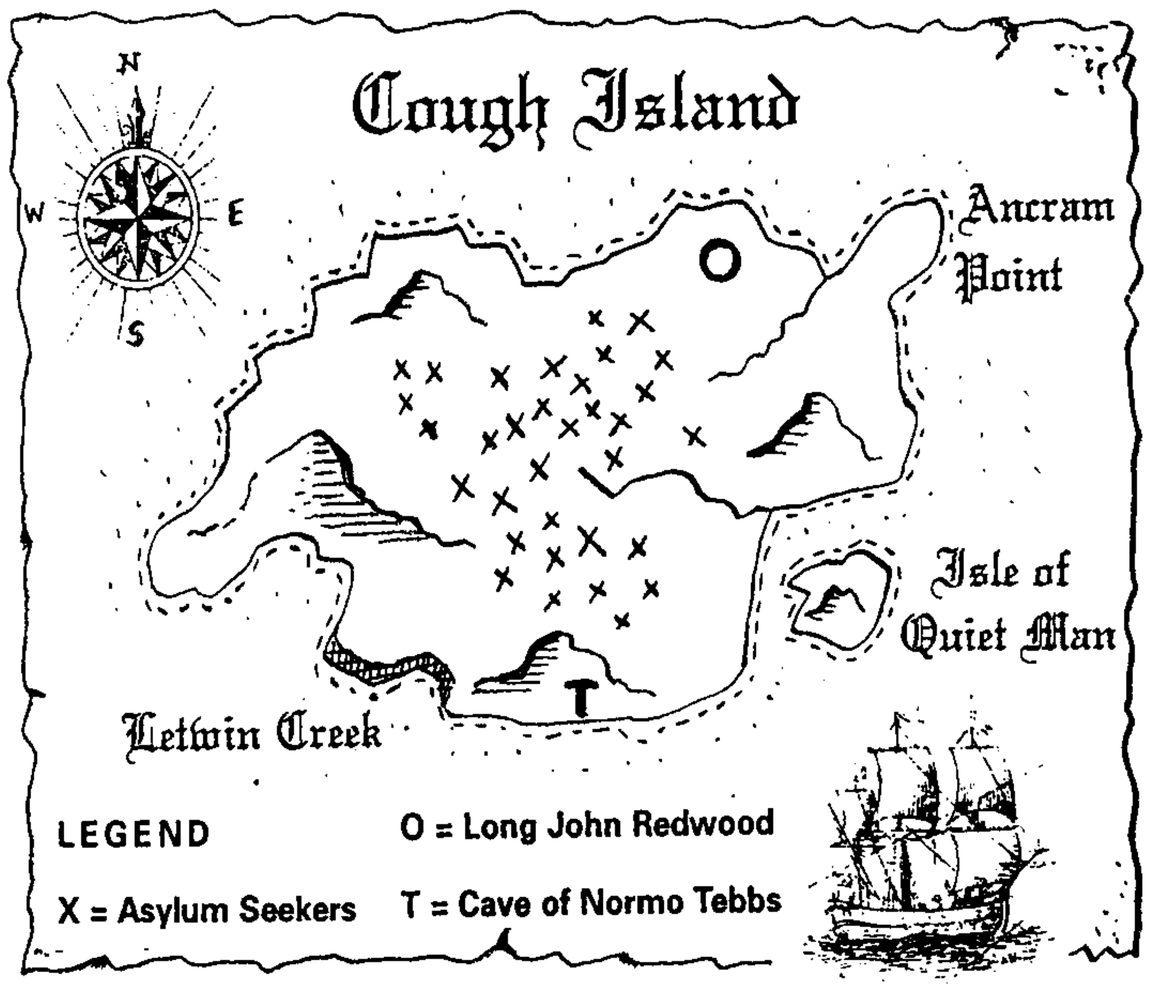
By Our Political Staff

IAIN Duncan Cough, leader of the Conservative Party, yesterday astonished his two remaining followers (Sid and Doris Enfield, 75) by coming up with an idea.

Cough, in a major speech about his proposals to abolish the 5/– fishing licence, went off his notes to announce his solution to the problem of asylum seekers.

"Why don't we", he said, "put all these people on some island somewhere, where they can be processed?"

When asked where this island might be, he said that he hadn't yet worked it out, but what he had in mind was something like the map in one of his favourite books, *Captain Pugwash and the Asylum Seekers.*



Cough Island: "Here Be Votes"

AUTUMN BOOKS

THE A.N. WISLON I KNEW

BY IRIS MURDOCH

A LOT has been written recently about the famous novelist A.N. Wilson, and his sad mental decline. Now Iris Murdoch, a friend of Wilson, describes in sometimes painful detail the slow collapse of one of the great minds of the 20th century into a twilight world where nothing made any sense. "It was acutely distressing for me," writes Iris, "to see that Andrew couldn't remember from one day to the next what he had written the day before. One minute he was writing that John Bayley was a marvellous and saintly figure, the next that my husband was a ruthless parasite only interested in exploiting my name for money."

Who would have thought that our lasting image of the great Wisloch would be of a childlike figure slumped in a darkened room, writing endless articles for the *Daily Teletubbies.*

"I absolutely loved it. Andrew had such beautiful manners" – The late Lady Mosley.

DIARY

JACKIE COLLINS'S HOLLYWOOD PETS

Fifi took a long, deep breath and prepared to make her entrance into mega-exclusive Mario's, situated in a prime position on Hollywood High Street. Her only clothing? A black leather collar.

Shoulders back. Superwatt smile. Luxuriant hair backcombed to perfection.

Tail wagging.

And saliva dripping from her gums.

Fifi was one dazzling, sexy, gimme-gimme-gimme Dalmatian. A bitch who knew just how to make any dog in Hollywood sit up and pant. But there there was just one animal she wanted eating out of her paw that night.

His name? Chip. Chip the Chipmunk. The biggest stud in town – and tonight he would be hers.

Yap. Fifi had it all.

Or did she?

Hollywood.

Home of the movies.

Across the other side of Mario's Pet Parlour, Laura Love fluttered her to-die-for eyes and pointed her drop-dead breasts at Hollywood big-shot Herman Hunk.

Jeez. Herman had never seen such sensual, mind-blowing whiskers on a female. And those feet of hers! They could grip you where you'd never been gripped before.

All four of them.

Mmmm. Laura Love was one helluva hamster. They said she could spin a wheel and nibble at the same time.

And Herman was ready for the chase.

So Herman was a cockatoo. What did that matter, godammit? He was the biggest cockatoo in Hollywood. The only bird who could make or break a budding star.

And more, much more, than that.

He could crush birdseed in his cheeks.

No way had Chip ever seen such knock-em-dead bosoms on a hamster. And, as one of Hollywood's leading chipmunks, he had seen one helluva lot of naked hamsters in his time.

When Laura Love span round on her state-of-the-art Gucci hamster-wheel, those bosoms of hers bounced about like no other bosoms had ever bounced about on a wheel before.

So what if Herman Hunk – the most powerful cockatoo in Hollywood – had earmarked Laura for himself? He might be one helluva bigshot in the birdcage – but that didn't mean he knew how to bring a hamster to multiple orgasm. And then some.

One thing. Was for sure.

Chip had to have Laura Love for himself.

And another thing.

Was also for sure.

With his I-don't-give-a-shit-what-you-think attitude, Chip would do anything – ANYTHING – to get-what-he-wanted.

As she wafted into Mario's, panting fit to bust, her tail wagging provocatively, Fifi thought back to her early years. It had been no fun being a Dalmatian puppy.

Abandoned starving in the street. Picked up by a dog's home. Skin covered in spots.

Talk about a dead end.

Yap. It was a not-much-hope-for-the-future kind of a wretched-beginning-to-a-life sort of way-to-grow-up. And – yap – Fifi wanted out-of-it, big-time.

Then one day. She heard they were auditioning. Auditioning for this mega-huge new mega-movie.

101 Dalmatians.

That was one helluva lot of dalmatians to fit into one movie. But she was knew. Then and there. That she was going to be. The One.

Herman was an I-get-what-I-want-and-nobody-ain't-gonna-stop-me kind of cockatoo. Hot, horny, sexy – and ruthless. When Fifi had walked into the audition that day Herman knew in a mega-second just what it was he wanted.

Her.

Sure 'nuff, Fifi had fallen for his birdie-talk big-time, just like all the rest.

"Make out with Herman the Cockatoo, baby – and you'll be the world's numero-uno mega-star".

It ended with the horny cockatoo and the up-for-anything dalmatian rolling around on the casting-couch together, all feathers and spots. And all for what?

When they cast the movie, Fifi was just the 53rd Dalmatian, a two-bit one-of-the-crowd bark-'n' wag kind-of-a-role.

And Herman Hunk?

He was off chasing hamsters.

I'll get that sonofabitch, vowed Fifi, and I don't care how long I have to wait.

That was then. This was now.

And not just now.

Mega-now.

Strutting into Mario's naked but for her leather collar, Fifi felt all the eyes in the room homing in on her.

Or nearly all.

The only eyes not popping out of their head at the sight of Fifi's enormous black-and-white dalmatian breasts with huge, erect nipples belonged to Chip the Chipmunk, the red-hot squirrel sex machine. How come? Fifi growled with mad envy-style jealousy when she realised why.

Chip's eyes were on that superslut hamster with the voluptuously furry breasts: Laura Love.

Hollywood. Rollercoaster home of broken dreams. With one great gulp, Fifi gobbled up Laura Love and spat her out, sending Herman Hunk's precious feathers flying.

Hunk would never nibble birdseed in that town again. What-a-babe! Chip the Chipmunk was impressed. Mean-and-ruthless turned him on, mega-style – especially in one determined, little-girl-lost, steamy, super-horny dalmatian.

"Hey, babe, come back to my place for a real juicy bone," he gasped.

"I love you, Chip," she whispered.

"You too, babe," he answered, reaching for a mega-nut.

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

IS IT TRUE THAT YOU FIRST SAW YOUR WIFE DEBS ON A T.V. COMMERCIAL FOR TOOTHPASTE?
YEAH. IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.
AND YOU GOT YOUR MANAGER TO CONTACT HER AGENT TO SET UP A DATE?
NO. THAT'S TOTAL PIFFLE.
I'M VERY OLD-FASHIONED AND PROPER WHEN IT COMES TO THAT SORT OF THING...
I GOT MY LAWYER TO CONTACT HER. DIRECT.
I SEE.

Literary Review

Prize chumps

Elizabeth Costello
JM Coetzee
(Secker, £14.99)
My Life As A Fake
Peter Carey
(Faber, £16.99)

THERE'S an old literary saying that "no one wrote anything good after winning the Nobel Prize". In the case of the Stockholm dosh, there's the fact that many of the winners are already too old to hold a pen; but the saw reflects a wider feeling that cheques from a panel can fatally unbalance the already high self-regard of writers.

So what do people write after winning the Booker? In the case of JM Coetzee and Peter Carey, they went on – more than a decade later – to win the Booker again. They are the only two writers to have done this. So what do people write after winning the Booker twice? Conveniently, both of the two-cheque guys have a new book in the September lists. And comparison between them suggests there may indeed be scientifically observable consequences from eating too much chicken at the Guildhall.

Spookily, both Carey and Coetzee – who scooped their prizes with compelling narratives about Australian and South African history – have now turned in tricksy little books about the literary world. And you really start humming the *X-Files* theme on finding that each has separately decided that the time has come to try a story in the first-person narrative of a female character.

Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* affects to tell the story of a celebrated senior female Australian novelist who now travels the world appearing at literary conferences, giving speeches and receiving prizes. Apart from Salinger and Pynchon, Coetzee is the most private of famous writers: refusing interviews, sometimes declining to pick up in person the many awards his work accepts.

Even so, it's clear that Coetzee is teasing us to see Elizabeth as autobiography. Her best-known book was a variation on Joyce's *Ulysses*; he has written novels reworking themes from Defoe and Kafka. Even more nudgingly, most of the lectures Mrs Costello delivers in the book have already been given by Coetzee himself or published as non-fiction. *Elizabeth Costello* is effectively a meditation on how the literary circuit can ruin novelists for writing: in the many years over which the book is set, the fictional novelist never seems to write any fiction.

This is all very po-mo – now you don't see me, now you do – but the book further complicates the equation through a sheer failure of novelistic technique. Although Costello is supposedly Australian, Coetzee never attempts to give her plausible Oz dialogue – she has the voice of the Cape – and twists the story to keep her on African soil as often as possible. When she starts to speak, if you're not seeing Professor Coetzee in a dress, you're seeing Doris Lessing or Nadime Gordimer.

Suggesting that double-Booker laureates may indeed have a link by email or something deeper, Peter Carey's *My Life As A Fake* is strikingly similar in both techniques and failures. After a South African man trying to ventriloquise Australian female, we here have a Sydney bloke aiming to put himself over as an aristocratic English woman telling a story in which, for a long stretch, she is also impersonating a Malaysia-based man telling her a story within a story.

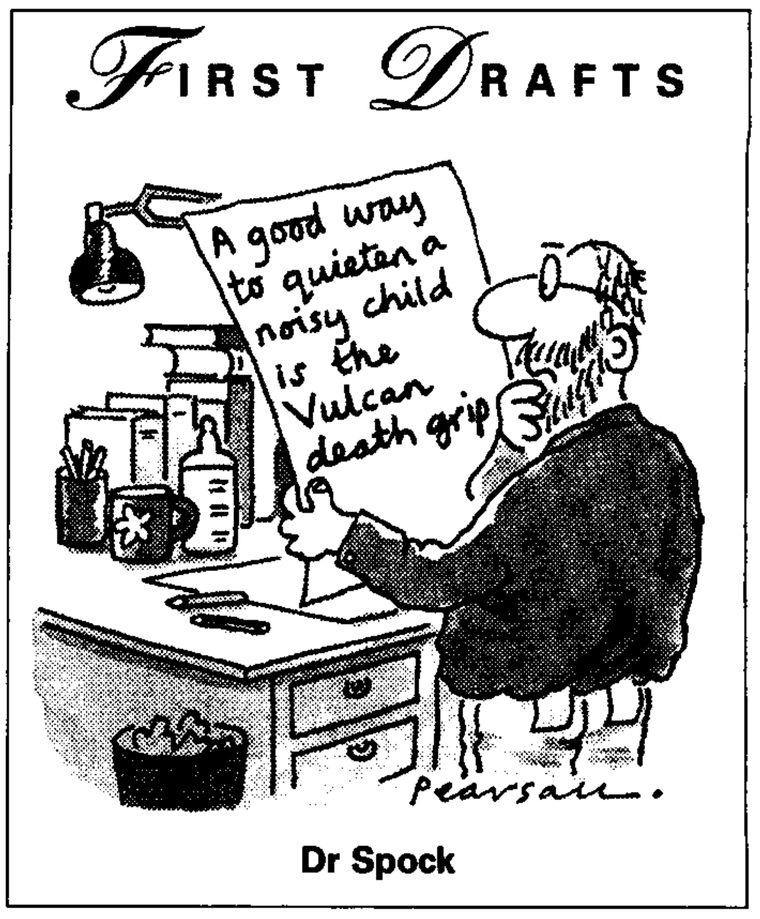
Unfortunately Carey, like Coetzee, proves to be no prose Rory Bremner. His narrative disguise amounts to giving the woman a posh name – Sarah Wode-Douglas – and a tight-knickered delivery which is fairly convincing but entirely denies Carey the vivid vernacular which informed books such as *Jack Maggs* and *True History Of The Kelly Gang*. His Malaysian expat impersonation rarely goes beyond the irritating tick of adding the suffix "lah" to certain words.

In another similarity with *Elizabeth Costello*, *My Life As A Fake* also tries to make fiction from a mass of established factual material. Sarah Wode-Douglas, who runs a small magazine, becomes involved in a literary hoax of the post-war years, in which a series of spoof modernist poems were published under the name "Bob McCorkle". The editor is subsequently sued for obscenity.

As all Carey's Australian readers – and many of his English ones – will know, this is simply the "Ern Malley" case from 1944, given some new names and a long, rambling afterlife in Asia. Not only are the "McCorkle" poems those originally written by Malley, but the evidence given by Carey's fictional magazine editor in court reproduces the actual testimony of Max Harris and so on.

So both Carey and Coetzee have written novels in which the central questions are: what exactly is fiction and how do novels work? They have also told stories which essentially consist of setting increasingly tough challenges for themselves as writers, like a diver demanding ever higher boards. Can I be a woman? Can I be a woman telling a story told to her by a man? If factual material is placed unchanged within a novel, does it retain the status of fiction?

These are the kind of questions which begin to obsess people whose only experience of life for decades has been the writing of books. Regrettably for the reader, not only are the queries arcane but the answers to most of them are "no". Either this is an inevitable progress for famous writers or chicken served at Booker dinners should urgently be sent to the lab for analysis. And we have another reason not to risk giving Salman Rushdie the Booker for the second time.



Dr Spock

BOOKS & BOOKMAN

■ SO what if *Dead Lucky* is codswallop from beginning to end? Who cares if the book's "revelation" – that "Lord Lucan" was actually a drunken Lancastrian folksinger – has been instantly disproved?

Not its publisher: he is too busy counting his loot. "There's Dosh in Tosh" has long been the credo of John Blake, aka Flakey Blakey, the former Robert Maxwell lieutenant who now earns his fortune publishing the memoirs of unrepentant thugs and the batty conspiracy theories of Nicholas "Sneaky" Davies and John McVicar.

It was also Blake who in 1996 published *The Nemesis File*, a sensational shock-horror memoir from former top SAS hitman "Paul Bruce" (ghostwritten by "Sneaky" Davies) which described how the SAS had assassinated dozens of Catholics without their families or the IRA ever noticing their demise. As the *Eye* revealed at the time, the author – real name Paul Inman – was not a former SAS man at all and had simply made the whole thing up. Yet Flakey Blakey continued to insist that the story was true – even after the author himself had confessed all – and the book sold more than 100,000 copies in hardback.

With *Dead Lucky* already at number three in the W. H. Smith bestseller list (and Blake still hilariously standing by his story), the Lucan farrago could prove equally lucrative.

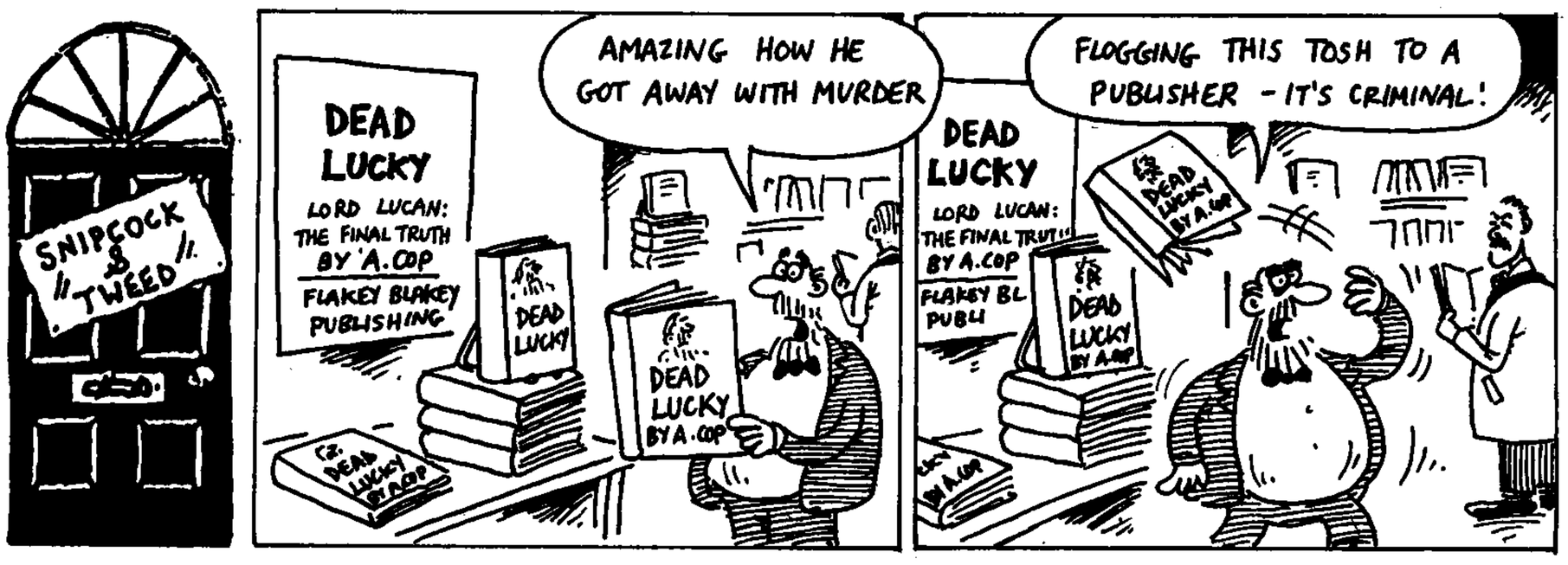
■ ONE incidental revelation from the latest Lucan stunt is that the august *Sunday Telegraph* now has lower journalistic standards than both the *News of the Screws* and Dirty Desmond's rags; about as low, indeed, as those of Flakey Blakey himself.

The *Screws* invested thousands of pounds in the story, but then decided not to print anything because, er, it wasn't true. The same small scruple explains why the *Daily* and *Sunday Express* declined to buy serial rights in *Dead Lucky*.

But there were no such qualms for Dominic Lawson. When a newspaper serialises a sensational book, it usually runs a front-page news piece as well. But no *Sunday Telegraph* hacks were put on to the story, mainly because Lawson guessed that it was bollocks. By running a huge question in the front-page flannel-panel instead – "IS THIS LORD LUCAN?" – Lawson ensured that he could later deny ever believing that the answer was yes. As he now admits, the story was "inherently improbable" but provided "a rattling good yarn" which helped sell extra copies of his paper.

Which, of course, is precisely what Rupert Murdoch said about the Hitler Diaries!

■ SMALLER publishers were enthusiastic when it was


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
DEAD LUCKY
LORD LUCAN: THE FINAL TRUTH BY 'A. COP
FLAKEY BLAKEY PUBLISHING
DEAD LUCKY
DEAD LUCKY BY A. COP
AMAZING HOW HE GOT AWAY WITH MURDER
DEAD LUCKY
LORD LUCAN: THE FINAL TRUTH BY A. COP
FLAKEY BL PUBLI
DEAD LUCKY BY A. COP
FLOGGING THIS TOSH TO A PUBLISHER - IT'S CRIMINAL!

announced that ex-Hammicks MD Trevor Goul-Wheeker would be joining WH Smug as executive director of books.

But Clever Trevor will find it hard to change attitudes at the company, judging by the recent experience of Pocket Mountains, an Edinburgh-based company that produces hill-walking guides. It has had some success with its first three titles, one of which is among the top ten Scottish bestsellers, and all of which have been pushed by Ottakar's and Borders.

When the company asked WH Smug to stock the guides, Pocket Mountains MD Robbie Porteous was told the books "were of regional interest only (by which I think he meant Scotland)". Protests that the books were doing well across the UK were dismissed. The book on walking in the Cairngorms, said the Smug's man, could only be of interest to people who lived in the Cairngorms. So much for tourism.

■ ARE Penguin's fancy new offices at Shell-Mex House by the Thames such a good idea?

It seems the cost of running the riverside location is so exorbitant that commissioning budgets have had to be cut and viable book projects shelved. Some mistake, shurely?

'Bookworm'

"Does my bum look big out of this?"

That Booker shortlist meeting in full...

Scene: the offices of the Man Group plc, somewhere in the City of London. Present are Professor John Carey, Dr A.C. Grayling, Rebecca Stephens MBE, Francine Stock and D.J. Taylor

CAREY: Splendid. Excellent. Very good. Would you mind moving along the sofa, Anthony, and there'll be more room for the rest of us.

GRAYLING (*puzzled*): Not more room, surely? Just less of it occupied.

(There is a knock at the door. It opens to admit MARTYN GOFF, the prize's senior administrator.)

GOFF: I do apologise most sincerely, everybody, for my tardiness (*he trips over one of Ms Stephens' crampons*). I have just been on the telephone to the arts editors of the *Independent*, the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph* and the *Times* feeding them contradictory information.

CAREY: Very good. Excellent. Splendid. I'm sure we're all very grateful. Now, before I explain what we've decided, is there anything that anybody would like to say?

TAYLOR (*yawns*): Basically it's all crap, isn't it? None of this lot's a patch on Thackeray, are they? I mean, ask yourselves (*he circulates several recent articles from the* Guardian *elaborating this original thesis*). All the same, I was captivated by the little-known Welsh novelist Daffyd Huw Hee's *Incident at Llandrindod Wells* (Taff Press, £11.99), which seemed to bring a real authenticity to the plight of the Powys sheep farmer. The same could be said of Drusilla Geordie's epic north-eastern family saga *Me Mam, Me Dad and Wor Uncle Jackie*, which seemed purposefully to reinvent the idea of the regional novel in a very meaningful...

(He continues for some while.)

GRAYLING: I think, if I might say so, that now – if indeed there is a now – might be an appropriate time – although, of course, what do we mean by "time"? – to return to first principles. Perhaps we should ask ourselves what we require from a novel, and indeed what a novel requires from us. Do we wish to be instructed? Amused? Enlightened? Taken out of ourselves or put back into ourselves? "Ourselves". Now what, I wonder, are they? These, it strikes me, are important questions.

CAREY: Splendid. Excellent. Very good. I didn't really like the J.M. Coetzee either. Martyn, be a good chap will you and ring the *Observer* to tell them the judges are divided.

STOCK (*bravely*): I thought the Martin Amis was, well, you know, just... yucky!

CAREY: I told you at the longlist meeting, young lady, that I wouldn't tolerate this kind of thing. Do I have to repeat myself?

STEPHENS: Martin Amis... well I read it and I thought...

CAREY: Splendid. Excellent. Very good indeed. Well, I think that settles it. Perhaps I could just read you all this draft press release? (*Takes out piece of paper*) "As ever, producing a shortlist for the 2003 Man Booker Prize has been an uphill climb...

GRAYLING (*puzzled*): Aren't all climbs necessarily, or at any rate in a strictly philosophical sense, uphill? Though I suppose that technically an ascent implies a descent as its precondition...

STEPHENS (*perks up*): Well, I climbed down Everest once. It was just after I'd climbed up it...

Continues interminably...

Warballs

"A federal judge ruled this week that 9/11 victims and their families can proceed with lawsuits alleging negligence on the part of their fellow victims in the aviation industry and at New York's World Trade Center.

"Such claims may strike some as unjust. But the ruling is legally sound, and the orderly sorting out of responsibilities is a sign, in its way, that terrorists have not undermined American principles and processes, which remain fully functional and characteristically feisty." — *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* (Minnesota), 11 September 2003.

"Yoko Ono is to re-stage her conceptual art project which saw her invite people to cut off her clothes until she was left naked. Ono said she wanted to recreate the event because of political changes since the 11 September tragedies. 'Force and intimidation were in the air. People were silenced,' she said." — BBC News online.

"I came back to *Yellow Dog* again after 11 September and I remember thinking, right, let's make this a comic novel, because, as well as rationality and morality, the whole notion of comedy had been put at risk. To me, it felt like the end of the Age of Normalcy – if there ever has been such a thing." — Martin Amis, *Sunday Telegraph*.

"A trainee manager at Spearmint Rhino was sacked and threatened with a drugs bust after he reported that lapdancers were breaking the rules by offering sex for cash, a tribunal heard yesterday... Spearmint Rhino insists Mr Singh was made redundant in April because of a drop in customers caused by adverse publicity and the knock-on effects of the 11 September terror outrages of 2001." — *Daily Telegraph*.

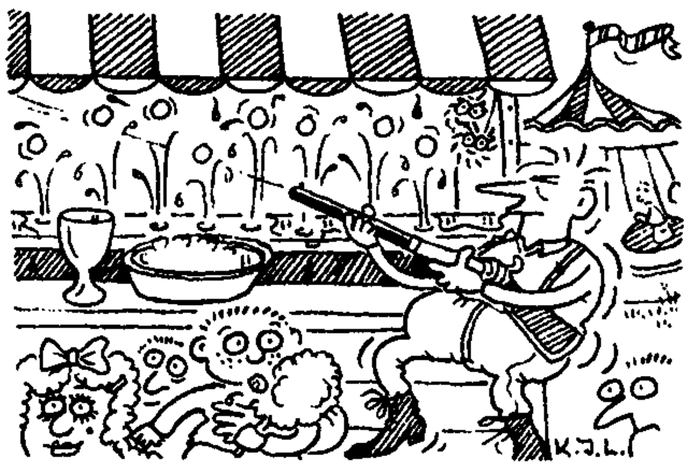
Pseuds Corner

Shakespeare and the ethics of cultural exchange
Philippa Berry and John J. Joughin

The aim of this seminar is to promote the elaboration of a new ethical reading of Shakespeare, one which is allied not to a post-Aristotelian ethics of character as self-consciousness but rather to phenomenological conceptions of ethos as a Subjective making room, an opening (which may be effected by a real or symbolic violence) to the diverse modes of alterity that are encountered in the processes of social and cultural exchange. We suggest that it is timely to reconfigure a Shakespearian ethis as a set of cultural and relational openings which accord value, not to singular subjective modes of knowledge, but rather to a set of dramatic acts and relationships.

British Shakespeare Association conference programme

[Damien] Hirst's radical treatment of The Last Supper presents Jesus and the Disciples as thirteen ping-pong balls suspended on spurting fountains of red wine, positioned along one side of a long Formica table. A silver chalice sits on the table and a white plastic washing up bowl to bathe Christ's feet. Plastic tubing and funnels for the wine are placed beneath it. Unlike many of Hirst's sculptures which use a glass case as the analytical and containing structure, this work is



conceived as far less bounded, spilling messily into the space, it feels precarious and alive, hopeful but fragile.

White Cube gallery press release, Damien Hirst: Romance in the Age of Uncertainty

Kate Aynsley-Smith's work plays with notions of reality. The artist uses abstracted instantiations of consumer iconography. Slogans and labels connoting industrial, cultural and advertising references are reconstructed in a repudiation of Panglossian optimism which points to a positive eschatology that vitiates any thought of human redemption.

Stables Gallery Twickenham press release

PhD research focussing on a critique of the modernist assumptions underlying orthodox approaches to learning. I am exploring the possibility of a postructuralist reconceptualisation of learning as a metaphor for a destabilising practice.

University website

"Journalism is to literature what excrement is to food..."

Chris Eubank
Radio 2

Pseuds Corporate

Health Professions Wales has quickly established an effective network of contacts and partnerships to assist with engaging multiple stakeholders in underpinning developments in the workforce of NHS Wales. At a time of major restructuring across the health sector in Wales, it is attempting to generate greater synergy within and across the various contributors, so unlocking and realising the potential of the NHS workforce.

From Newyddion, the official newsletter from HPW [Health Professions Wales]

CONTRIBUTORS: Nigel McKernaghan, Robert Jeffcoate, Ginny Sykes, Nicholas Myerson, P. Luffrum, Penny Parks.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

A DAM DISGRACE

THE World Bank likes to boast of its hostility to corruption. It even keeps a register of firms and individuals it believes to be corrupt, and bans ("debars") them from World Bank business. But a court case in southern Africa has exposed a monstrous case of corruption by a powerful multinational with which the World Bank continues to do business.

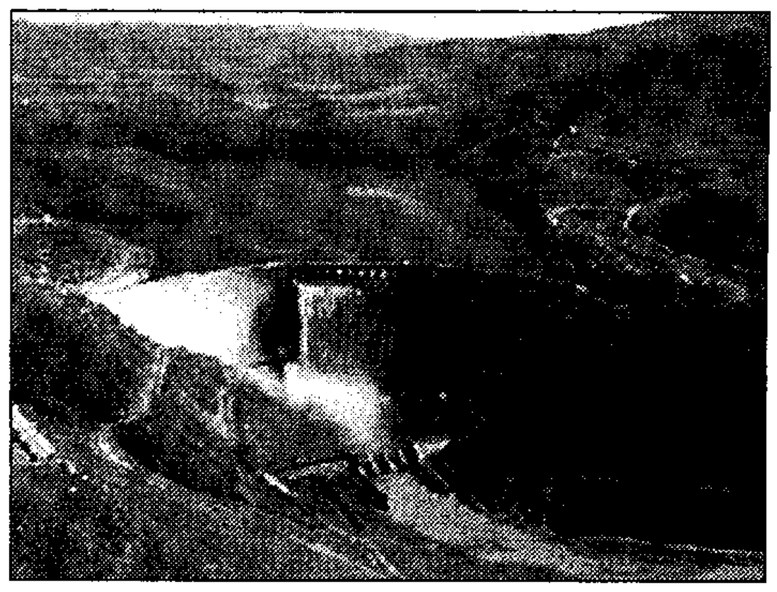
The company is Acres International, a huge Canadian construction company, which is accused of paying a vast bribe to the former chief executive of Lesotho Highlands Development Authority to facilitate a contract connected with one of the world's biggest dam projects: a series of reservoirs to supply South African cities with water.

The project started in 1986. In 1994 the chief executive of the authority, Masupha Sole, was suspended and later sacked after evidence emerged in an audit that he had taken bribes. In 1999, he was convicted and sent to prison for 15 years. Soon after his conviction a high-level meeting was convened by the World Bank in the Sheraton Hotel, Pretoria.

A vast array of banks and governments were represented, including the British high commissioner in Lesotho, Kaye Oliver OBE. Everyone agreed that if Sole had been bribed, someone – probably a big construction company connected with the dams – must have bribed him. Everyone agreed that the government of tiny Lesotho (pop: 1.8m) needed help to identify and prosecute the bribers. The minutes of the meeting reports the British high commissioner saying that the department for international development (DfID) "could possibly offer direct assistance" and the World Bank representatives "also indicated willingness to explore other ways to assist the government of Lesotho".

In the event no assistance emerged. Alone, the Lesotho government set about prosecuting a long list of some of the biggest construction companies in the world for bribery. The companies and their expensive lawyers argued successfully for separate trials. Top of the list was Acres International, which was eventually convicted last year on overwhelming evidence of bribing Sole to the tune of at least Can $1m, paid into Swiss bank accounts. The purpose of the bribe, the judges found, was to ensure that Acres kept the contract for building the dam without having to bother with competition.

The company appealed and the appeal has just been heard at Maseru, the Lesotho capital, by three South African judges. Their devastating judgment on 15 August upheld the original conviction and slightly reduced the fine to 15m mloti, about £1.3m. The judges denounced bribery as "a corrupt and ugly offence striking cancerously at the roots of justice and integrity". The judges went on: "Such profits as it (Acres) may have made on the dam contract will, we are certain, be dissipated by not only the very large fine we intend to impose but also by all the costs



it incurred in the various protracted proceedings not only in these courts but also before the World Bank. Its travails are by no means over. An embargo by the World Bank and other institutions such as donor agencies is no remote possibility."

News of the conviction will shock other construction companies, including Balfour Beatty in Britain, and consultants who are in line for separate prosecutions by the Lesotho authorities. It will be even more of a shock to the World Bank, whose sanctions committee in 2001 found the evidence against Acres "not reasonably sufficient to justify debarment". The World Bank must now decide whether to embargo a huge company and face the prospect of a further embargo on a host of others among the world's top companies.

The *Eye* asked a spokesman for the World Bank in Washington if any statement had been made about the Lesotho judgment. He replied: "No. The Bank does not make statements about cases of actual or potential debarment." The transcript of the Lesotho appeal, he said, was "under review".

BLOOD MONEY

HEALTH secretary John Reid's sudden announcement that the government will pay "compassion" money to thousands of patients infected by contaminated blood products with the potentially fatal liver disease, hepatitis C, surprised everyone – even his own officials.

But if Reid was hoping to buy off people whose lives have been devastated by the debilitating disease which can end in liver failure and cancer for an insulting £20,000 to £45,000, he is mistaken. Many will refuse to accept payment in order to pursue their claim that successive governments have covered up a massive poisoning scandal.

Contaminated blood and clotting factors, much of it from high risk paid donors in the US, were given to thousands of people until 1985, when heat treatment introduced to combat HIV also by chance eradicated Hep C. About 5,000 haemophiliacs and many more patients given blood transfusions for accident or surgery were infected with Hep C. Around 1,200 haemophiliacs, most of whom have since died, were also infected with HIV.

The government has always maintained that it could not have known about the hepatitis risks because a specific test for Hep C was not available until 1991. And even last week, after Dr Reid's sudden about turn, the health department was stressing that these ex-gratia payments were not "compensation" because so little was known about the condition at the time of infection.

However, health service documents unearthed last month by Haemophilia Action show that doctors and some health department officials had been linking cases of Hep C – then referred to as "non A, non B hepatitis" to specific "suspect" batches and brands of blood clotting agents since the early 1970s. A working party report of haemophilia centre directors showed haemophiliacs were "four to 20 times more likely to get hepatitis C from certain US products". Yet still they bought it in and gave them to unsuspecting haemophiliacs.

The following year a meeting of the working party, attended by health department officials, stressed the need to continue to collect data on the batch numbers of blood products given to patients who went on to develop the virus. Dr John Craske, then of the Public Health Laboratory Service, suggested "it might be necessary to again ask for details of all patients who had received treatment with a particular 'suspect batch'." He said he also wanted liver samples from patients who died, particularly if "there was evidence of chronic liver failure".

Still nothing was done and, crucially, haemophiliacs were never alerted to the relative risks of different treatments – or indeed to any risk at all. Yet in 1978 Professor Eric Preston, a leading UK haemophilia expert, had already warned that this "non A, non B" hepatitis was serious and that it would be safer to give a synthetic product to those with mild haemophilia (about a third) or find a way to deactivate the virus.

Carol Grayson, whose haemophiliac husband has HIV and Hep C (and has also now been told that he may have been infected with CJD from a contaminated donor), unearthed the incriminating documents from files prepared by lawyers who were acting on behalf of haemophiliacs seeking compensation for contracting the swifter acting HIV from bad blood. Those who got a payment were forced to sign a waiver saying they would not sue for hepatitis C. Most had no reason to suspect they had the slow-burn disease. The documents prove that the government knew otherwise.

About 200 haemophiliacs have now launched proceedings against blood product manufacturers in the US. And if they can get their hands on these suspect batch numbers, it will no doubt help their claim dramatically. Mrs Grayson has written to the government asking for details.

Other haemophiliacs have also discovered that they were secretly tested for Hep C back in 1991 and not told the results. They have now made complaints to the General Medical Council about several doctors involved in the testing and the GMC is investigating.

Howard's Way

BACK in May *Eye* 1080 asked whether liars and cheats on the British stock exchange would be treated as harshly as their US counterparts.

The question arose after the big US investment banks were heavily fined by US regulators for hiring "analysts" who "advised" investors to spend their money in a way which benefited their employers.

Described by the *Financial Times* as "the worst financial scandal in a generation", all the big names were in the frame: Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, Merrill, UBS and others. Would British investment banks be subject to the same tough regulation?

We now have our answer from Sir Howard Davies, chairman of the UK's financial services authority (FSA). After an interminable "consultation" about what to do, Sir Howard finally addressed a CBI dinner in Scotland on 4 September where, to a chorus of warm "hear hears" and almost audible sighs of relief, he announced that, unlike the Americans, our regulators would be doing, well, bugger all.

He was glad to "confirm the approach that senior management should take responsibility for the appropriate management of conflicts of interest". There should, he said, be "less prescription" and we should "look to senior management to deliver appropriate standards". In other words, the people who hired biased and cheating analysts would be dealt with by... themselves.

POLICE 5

Innocent until sacked

WHEN a woman who appeared to be an ordinary member of the public handed in a £10 note she claimed to have found in the street at Linlithgow police station, PC Alistair Gemmell had no idea it was to herald the end of his career.

The woman was an undercover police officer, investigating the supposed disappearance of a £20 note which a member of the public reported handing in at the station.

At the time of the undercover hand-in in December 2000, PC Gemmell was working on two assault cases. He put the money in a locked drawer to be dealt with later. He says he wanted to discuss how to record anonymous hand-ins with his sergeant, but she was not on duty. In the end he finished his shift without dealing with the cash.

When he reported for his next shift, PC Gemmell was handcuffed and bundled into a car to be taken to Edinburgh. By the end of that day, which included four hours in the cells, he had been suspended on full pay – a situation that lasted two and a half years – but not charged with anything.

In April 2002, more than a year later, he was told he was to be charged with theft, even though the money had been found in his locked in-tray drawer at the police station.

This February the case went to court. Just a few hours into what was planned to be a two-day hearing, Sheriff Hector McLean halted proceedings and handed down a not guilty verdict after the police witnesses agreed the evidence was in PC Gemmell's favour. Nevertheless, last month PC Gemmell was sacked by Lothian and Borders police after an internal misconduct hearing.

"I'm on the dole for the first time since I left school," the former policeman told the *Eye*. "I'm still shocked that you can be cleared in court but can still lose your job in an internal hearing. I'm just devastated."

The Scottish Police Federation represented PC Gemmell throughout the misconduct process. General-secretary Doug Keil told the *Eye*: "We have a number of concerns about the misconduct hearing process and a lack of independence is one of them." He said he could not comment more specifically as the case was not yet finally closed, pending a decision on whether to appeal.

Lothian and Borders Police refused to comment on the case while an appeal was still possible.

In the meantime, no one has ever proved the existence of the first "lost" £20, let alone whether anyone in the police station actually pocketed it.

PADI WHACKED

THE damning inquest findings into the death of *Daily Telegraph* journalist David Graves, who drowned while on a press diving trip in the Bahamas, does not appear to have troubled the ever-growing "dive industry" much.

Last month Bahamian coroner William Campbell blamed a lack of safety and poor supervision of the shark-watching dive.

Graves, a 50-year-old father of two, lay dead on a coral shelf for 15 minutes before the two dive masters responsible for supervising the dive at Small Hope Bay on Andros Island were even aware he was missing. They had both got out of the water, removed their gear and one had lit a cigarette before anyone noticed that David had not surfaced.

Crucially on this dive – the second of a press trip – the supervisors had not operated the internationally recognised "buddy" system, a fundamental safety rule of always diving with a partner. (The buddy double-checks his or her partner's air and gear before entering the water, stays close during the dive and, vitally, provides assistance should an emergency arise.) Instead they had decided on a "group" dive. One of them, American Michael Hornby, told the coroner the buddy system "was overridden by a factor of safety, keeping everybody together in a group, which was easy to monitor if things went wrong".

Except the divers were not kept as a group. Graves, who had only recently qualified and was the least experienced of a largely inexperienced press group, had somehow become separated. (Other divers gave conflicting accounts of when he was last sighted). Evidently he ran out of air and, according to his dive computer records, tried an emergency ascent taking him to within feet of the surface, if not to the top. But no one saw him and no one was on hand to help. He sank back down and drowned.

The inquest heard that at the likely time he was in fatal difficulties one of the dive guides was adjusting a woman diver's weight belt "for several minutes" – even though she was about to surface at the end of her dive. Meanwhile the other dive master was filming the episode. (Curiously both the original video recording and a computer copy have been lost).

Offering the inquest jury the option of a very rare "gross negligence manslaughter" verdict, the coroner was damning. "Was it that Mr Graves was merely careless? Or was it that there was a disregard for the life and safety of David Graves?" he asked.

"The dive masters in their own words had a responsibility for the safety of the divers. In a group dive there are greater responsibilities on their shoulders. If their attention had not lapsed, could they have intervened and prevented the sequence of drowning that followed?"

He said they had a duty of care towards the divers and suggested there had been a breach of that duty. In the event, by four votes to three, the jury opted instead for an "open verdict".

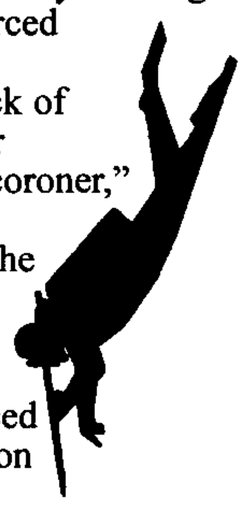
In the light of the inquest, the *Eye* asked what action had been taken in relation to the guides and safety procedures at Small Hope Bay. Jeff Birch, the dive school proprietor, muttered something about "inaccurate articles" and slammed down the phone.

PADI, the international and self-regulatory licensing body, lists Small Hope Bay as one its accredited "resorts". It said it never discussed the details of cases. But Pat Fousek, director of legal and risk management, said it always investigated reported deaths and action could range from giving counselling and advice to withdrawing accreditation.

The scale and scope of a PADI investigation is unclear; but PADI does not appear to have consulted the other press divers who gave evidence to the inquest and Small Hope remains a PADI-accredited resort.

The *Eye* also spoke to John Bantin, the contracted technical editor of *Diver Magazine* and whose sister organisation, Dive Show, was one of the organisers of the press trip. Bantin was on the trip taking photos for Dive Show and had told the coroner he had suggested to Birch that the divers should be escorted as a group and not be in buddy pairs because he believed they were "not experienced enough to help each other". He said he had seen David Graves rush to the surface on the first morning dive, leaving his buddy behind. (On that occasion the dive guide saw Graves and gave him some air from an emergency tank hanging under the boat, suggesting Graves was low on air.)

Asked whether in the light of the coroner's findings and the apparent failure of the group dive, Bantin now believed the buddy training system should have been reinforced rather than abandoned, he was unrepentant: "It just shows a lack of understanding of the underwater environment on the part of the coroner," he said.



PADI has agreed to look at the case again and Graves' widow, Diana, anxious that a similar tragedy does not befall other newly qualified and inexperienced divers, is sending the organisation the inquest transcript.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **MINING COMPENSATION:** As thousands of South Africans poisoned by Cape plc's asbestos operations finally collect their hard-won damages this week, other big mining companies are braced for possible legal action from gold miners.

Echoing the Cape saga, several hundred gold miners from the Welkom area are suffering tuberculosis and silicosis – an often fatal lung disease caused by inhaling silica dust – and are seeking compensation from some of the largest gold mining companies, including British-based Anglo-American.

Richard Meeran, the British solicitor who worked on the Cape case and who met the gold miners last month, said that as with asbestos, the risks of working with silica were known for decades. But little or nothing was done to protect workers. While the asbestos industry has been made to pay for its disregard for its workers' safety, the gold mining industry "has so far got off scot free".

Yet the effects on gold mining communities has been equally devastating. Dan Mofokeng, of the Bond Victims Association in Welkom, which has been gathering evidence, said: "Sick miners and their families have been left jobless and impoverished."

Anglo-American has rejected the miners' allegations and said it will contest any action. Whether like Cape it prefers to spend more on lawyers' bills than compensation remains to be seen.

■ **YARL'S WOOD:** The prolonged (and from the prosecution's point of view, wholly unsatisfactory) case alleging arson and violent disorder against former inmates at Yarl's Wood detention centre provided no answer to the continuing question: did all the detainees survive?

There is still no trace of 14 of the inmates at the centre, though police say they have "intelligence" on 11 of them. Even assuming those 11 can be accounted for, what happened to the other three? Extensive forensic tests on debris from the centre showed no sign of human remains. But that may not be the end of the story.

A witness statement given to Bedfordshire police soon after the fire – on 7 March last year – may be an important clue.

Algerian-born Amir Mohammed Benzaoui said he had been taken to Yarl's Wood on 11 February last year. On the night of the fire he took refuge in an office with detention custody officers. When they got out of the room, they walked towards the door of the wing. "When we got to the door, it was opened and I saw a lot of police outside. They took the Group 4 officers outside and told me to go back in... I saw two persons lying on the floor at the door covered with a yellow blanket. Their heads and bodies were fully covered. I could not see them moving. I think these people were lifted up by the officers that were in the office with me."

Mr Benzaoui did not give evidence in last month's case. No one knows where he is. Like many potential witnesses, he was probably deported. But his statement may say something about the detainees that are still, even on the most generous interpretation of the police evidence, missing.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE Bank of England was sufficiently concerned about the quality (or lack of it) of some Standard Chartered customers and their money that it insisted this business was removed from the UK and dumped offshore where it was no longer a potential embarrassment.

Standard Chartered in turn appears to have been only too happy to comply by transferring to its Jersey bank and trust company a number of accounts about which questions had already been raised.

The background to these transfers – codenamed projects Bergerac and Heron – involving more than £400m in 1998 and 1999 is now being looked at by the Jersey financial services commission (JFSC), which is said to be less than pleased at the island being used as a dumping ground for suspect accounts and possibly dirty money.

In particular the Jersey regulator is said by sources with knowledge of its investigation to be concerned about several accounts which were transferred to the local Standard Chartered bank even though suspicious transaction reports (STRs) had already been made to the UK authorities about them. However, the suspicions in London about these accounts were not communicated to the bank in Jersey or to the JFSC – something investigators say should have happened.

STRs are the fast-crumbling, supposed first line of defence in anti-money laundering measures by banks and other financial institutions (plus accountants and lawyers who largely fail to file them on the basis their clients are all clean). The banks are required to pass on to the National Criminal Intelligence Service details of any money transfers or cash transactions which arouse suspicion of criminal activity.

This year the number of STRs from financial institutions in particular is estimated to hit 100,000 – a figure which is rendering the system all but useless as NCIS and the police forces to whom the reports are passed for analysis and investigation are incapable of handling so many. The previous year's figure was 70,000. And 100,000 is before the expected tidal wave of further reports anticipated from next year when estate agents, casinos and dealers in high-value goods will be required to make reports.

The STR explosion is not due to a pandemic of money laundering, although there is a lot of it about, mainly due to drugs. It is due to the fact that banks and building societies consider it safer to simply pass on an STR rather than evaluate the information themselves so as to avoid any possible liability. As a result most STRs refer to perfectly legitimate transactions and most of the rest remain uninvestigated by police officers drowning in a sea of electronic and paper reports.

The Bank of England's concerns were focused on Standard Chartered's Mayfair-based priority banking business which served more than 10,000 accounts. From 1997 it was pressing Standard Chartered to move that business with its mostly overseas customer base out of the UK. The financial services authority (FSA) was also involved in these discussions.

In 1998 Standard Chartered agreed to transfer those accounts it did not close. The bank appears itself to have accepted that more than £100m of its deposits were from customers it could and should do without.

The embarrassing inheritance from projects Heron and Bergerac – for older readers, a TV detective based in, yes, Jersey so somewhat obvious as a codename – has added to Standard Chartered's problems with the Jersey regulators. The JFSC is still studying evidence that the bank transferred more than £4m out of Iraqi-owned accounts in breach of UN and UK sanctions as disclosed in the last issue.

"An admirable plan, Mr Gribbs, but short on detail"

SUGGESTIONS by long-time Polly Peck fugitive and *Eye* favourite Asil Nadir that he yearns to leave his villa in extradition-free Northern Cyprus for the inside of a Brixton prison cell in order to clear his name should be taken with whole pillars of salt.

Nadir is a man who has always been capable of committing any crime other than those requiring courage. Otherwise, like his former key aide Elizabeth Forsyth, he would have flown back and taken his chances years ago – especially after her conviction was overturned on appeal in 1997. Nadir promised to return then, but never did – one of several similar broken promises before and since.

What appears to be taking place here is a game of poker played out in public for the benefit of an audience in the now divided but possibly soon to be reunited Cyprus. Nadir is said by local sources to be running out of funds and friends in Northern Cyprus where he fled in 1993 from the fraud charges following Polly Peck's collapse. He owes the local Turkish Cypriot government millions which he borrowed and never repaid. He is no longer as one with president Rauf Denktash who opposes unification because it would remove his power.

But Nadir is said to be concerned that his fate could be used as a bargaining chip in any discussions with the Greek Cypriot authorities and that he could be encouraged to leave, perhaps for Turkey. That, however, is not a place Nadir feels safe anymore after ripping off Turkish investors in a number of deals.

So the aim may be to show that he is prepared to return to face the Polly Peck music if only his hated enemy, the Serious Farce Office, would agree to let him stay out of prison while he fights any trial. If it refuses to agree to bail – which it has – then he can claim in Cyprus that it is the SFO's fault he has not returned to face trial and so should be left alone in his refuge.

To prove that point, after initially announcing that he was ready to fly back to London within days, once the SFO refused to play ball over bail Nadir's departure was suddenly postponed until "at least November" amid talk of a legal challenge to that decision and to any trial at all. If made, the challenge is likely to suffer the same fate as his previous attempt in 2000 to challenge his charges as an abuse of process unless Nadir is present. The court threw that out because he refused to return to Britain first.

The SFO quite rightly refuses to agree to bail for the simple reason that Nadir is an obvious flight risk (having done it once before) and if he were to return to even a united Cyprus before a trial started or even during it he could not be extradited because even the Greek Cypriots do not extradite their own citizens and Nadir would once again be exactly that.

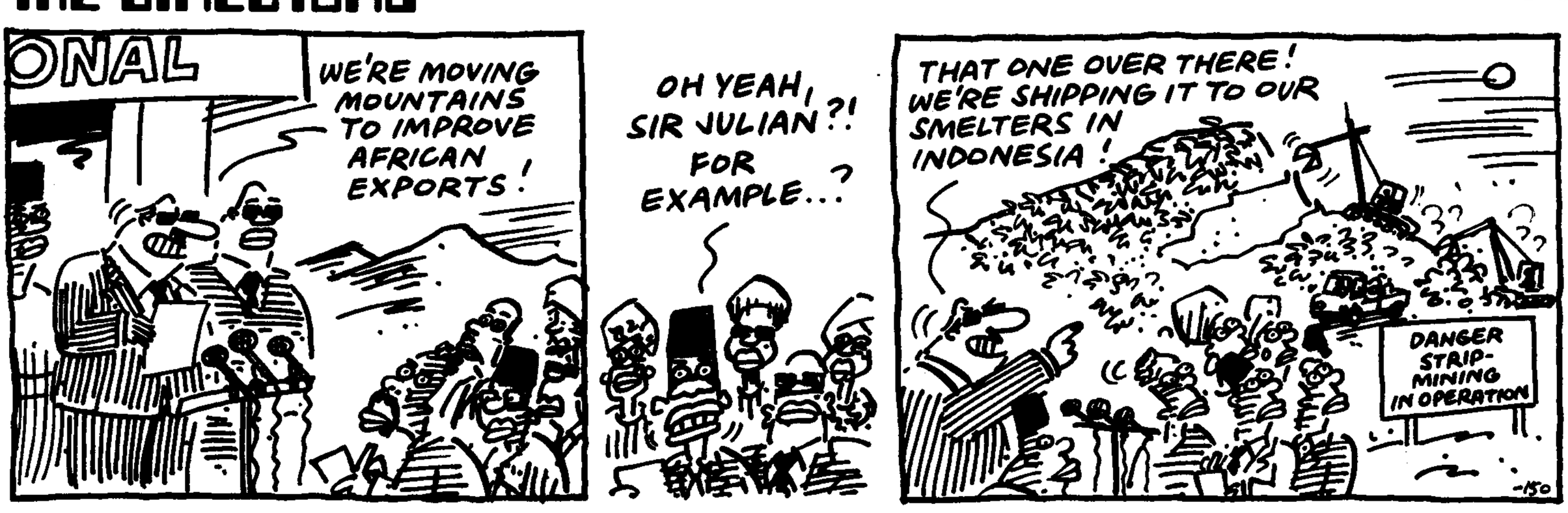
The other side of the Polly Peck coin is that it could be impossible now to bring Nadir to trial. The passage of time – Polly Peck collapsed in 1990 and the existing charges relate to offences up to three years before that – would make the availability of witnesses (some are now dead) and even possibly documents difficult.

Even if a pared down new indictment with all the documents and all the witnesses could be created, how could a witness speak convincingly from memory about events in 1987 or 1988 or even 1990 at a trial which would not start before 2005, allowing for the inevitable legal challenges and delays? Experts are unaware of any fraud trial being launched so long after the event.

That is the real abuse point which would probably succeed, which is why the SFO nightmare has always been that Nadir would take that chance and return. That was one reason it dropped charges against his other runaway aide, Jason Davies, who returned two years ago. But will Nadir have the balls to take his chances? Those who know him well in Britain and Northern Cyprus remain to be convinced.

HM Customs has become increasingly interested in the VAT affairs of a number of leading members of the Bar. Several discreet investigations have been launched into the failure of prominent and high-earning barristers and even QCs to either account fully or on time for the VAT they are paid along with their enviable fees.

One target for the VATman has been none other than senior treasury counsel Orlando Pownall. Last December a bankruptcy order was obtained against Pownall by the Customs VAT section in Liverpool.


THE DIRECTORS
DREDGE & RIGG
ONAL
WE'RE MOVING MOUNTAINS TO IMPROVE AFRICAN EXPORTS!
OH YEAH, SIR JULIAN?! FOR EXAMPLE...?
THAT ONE OVER THERE! WE'RE SHIPPING IT TO OUR SMELTERS IN INDONESIA!
DANGER STRIP-MINING IN OPERATION
-150

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Winners and losers under Gordon Brown

Change in net worth since 2 May 1997 of...

the Duke of Westminster

+ £3.2bn

manufacturing

−£59bn

Source: newspaper Rich Lists; stock market values of steel, engineering and industrial companies

The bankruptcy petition had been issued two months earlier. This was all clearly a dreadful administrative mistake as the order was annulled in January. After all, being made bankrupt by one part of the treasury while being regularly paid by another arm of the government is somewhat embarrassing, especially for a QC.

TALK that Keith Harris is planning a bid to take Manchester United private will induce a grim smile from those who followed Harris into his Seymour Pierce venture just before the stock market cracked – not to mention those investors still marooned in Radio First or the football clubs who entrusted to him as chairman of the Football League to oversee its dealings with the now switched off ITV Digital.

Harris left HSBC in January 2000 to take stockbrokers Talisman House subsequently renamed Seymour Pierce upmarket, talking of making it a hotshot investment bank and fund manager relying on Keith's magic circle of City pals like Nigel Wray, Michael Edelson and Richard Desmond.

The shares had raced ahead from 10p in November 1999 in advance of the deal. They peaked at 109p within days. But it was all downhill from then. By the end of 2001 the price was back to 10p. This did not amuse those investors who had believed the Harris spin and taken shares at placings on the way down.

Earlier this year Harris bought out the investment banking side in an MBO for just £7.3m. This left a fund management business which is said to be close to unsaleable because it has only a handful of clients and they have a change of control clause which could see them walk if the business is sold. No wonder the rump of the business is now valued at just £22m with the shares at 3p. Yet a year ago the Harris camp were saying he had rejected bids of £80m for the group.

Radio First (chairman K. Harris) runs digital radio stations for four soccer clubs. It moved from OFEX to AIM in 2000 and raised £3.5m with a rights issue at 80p the following year. The shares were suspended in July 2002 because of cash problems. The price was then 4.5p. A promised return to AIM has not happened.

Meanwhile Harris has been busy advancing his football ambitions assisting the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed to raise funds for Fulham, advising Ken Bates on the sale of Chelsea to Roman Abramovich and all the while nursing his dream of becoming chairman of Manchester Utd.

If Harris succeeds, Manchester Utd fans may have less reason to cheer than their rivals at Chelsea if his business track record is any guide.

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by Cyclops

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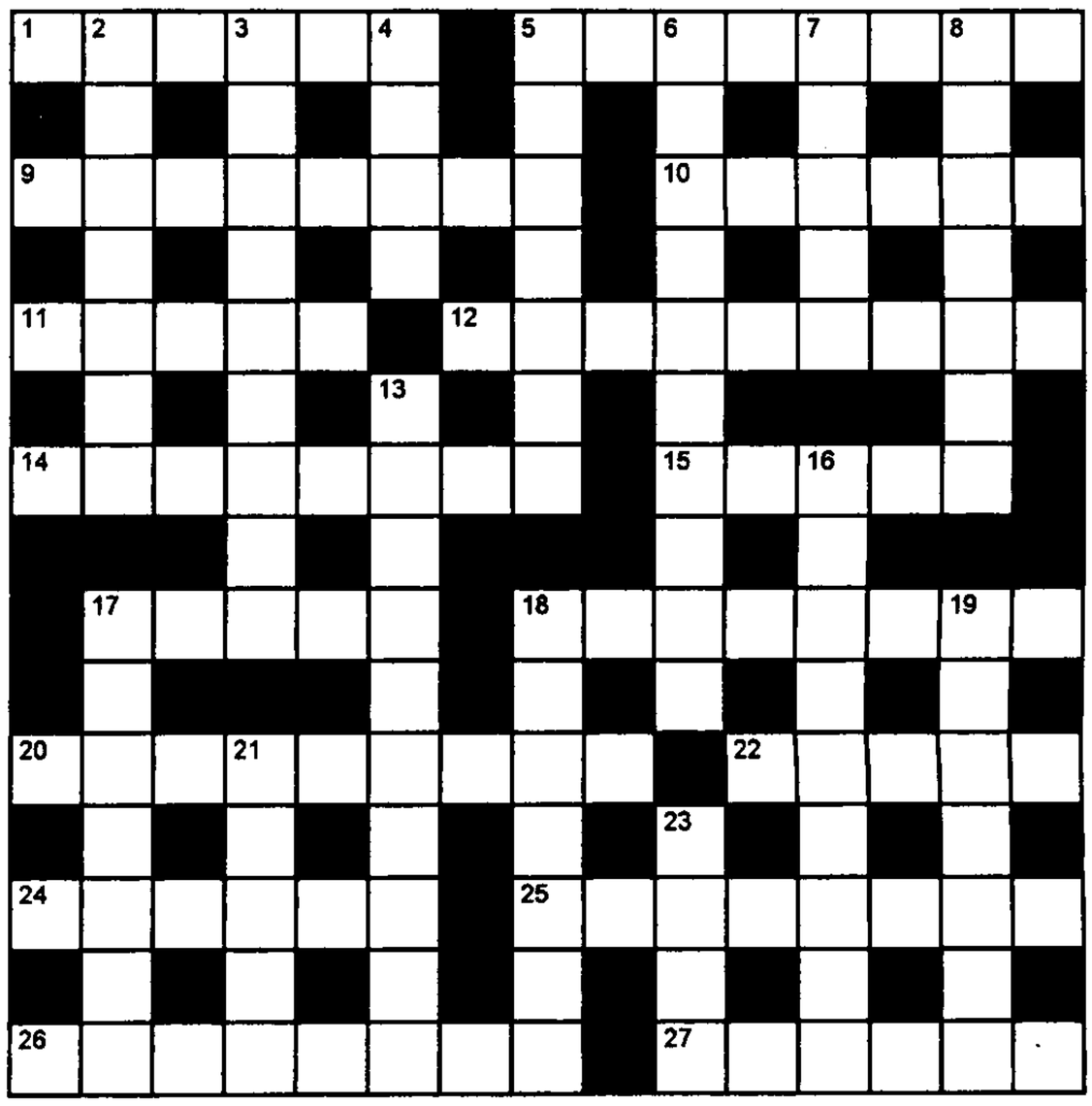

ACROSS

1/18dn. Greek's f— cheek, taking dramatist for a 6 (6,7)

5 Two family members get good sex (head only), as you'd expect from Liam and Noel (3,5)

9 As PM's spinning article of French 6 (3,5)

10 Not missing a beat, wriggling it in Cyclops (2,4)

11 Often seen before Christmas, pissed (5)

12 "Houses' terraces anti-English" (Hansard transcribed) (9)

14 Note in pisspoor Frost's defence (8)

15 Predator – in essence a Glenda? (5)

17 Pisspots take Brenda for e.g. Naomi Campbell (5)

18 Are Europeans allowed to be phallic symbols? (8)

20 The total number of orgasmic types welcomed in an open event (3,6)

22 Interest Pan in religion (5)

24 Bloody-minded bastard's moving Tuesday, right away (6)

25 Before *Grease* a girl could be virgin (5,3)

26 Public images of Eva penetrated by old Bob as evening starts (8)

27 Not gin-sozzled politician Henry's mug (6)

DOWN

2 The bum's rush as sailors ejaculated (5-2)

3 They could well see off perishing believers (4,5)

4 Prince: a model wanker (4)

5 Theatre Northward pisses about with mince pies (7)

6 You now have one intimate look (7,3)

7 Revealed as a queen getting licked topless (5)

8 6 shortly underground, subverted – shome mistake? (7)

13 "Porn my arse!" snapped 6 (5,5)

16 Bad taste good for Jonathan Cape (9)

17 Rod and a former lover erected the old chopper (7)

18 See 1 Across

19 Like the politician's response when woman conceals Visa transaction? (7)

21 Arabs with new leader, Bush's "lousy parasites" (5)

23 6 appears before an Irish Spring (4)

Crossword 243 winner: DAVID PUGH

ACROSS: 1 A week in politics 9 Plaudit 10 Fallacy 11 Cold sweat 12 Shorn 13 Slap-up 15 Eggheads 18 Camp fire 19 Embalm 22 Media 24 Sex kitten 26 Oil-palm 27 Tighter 28 Short and curlies.

DOWN: 1 Aspects 2 Email 3 Kids stuff 4 Nutter 5 Offstage 6 Idles 7 Inamorata 8 Sayings 14 Armadillo 16 Humdinger 17 Pressman 18 Commons 20 Mantras 21 Exotic 23 Abaft 25 Tutsi.

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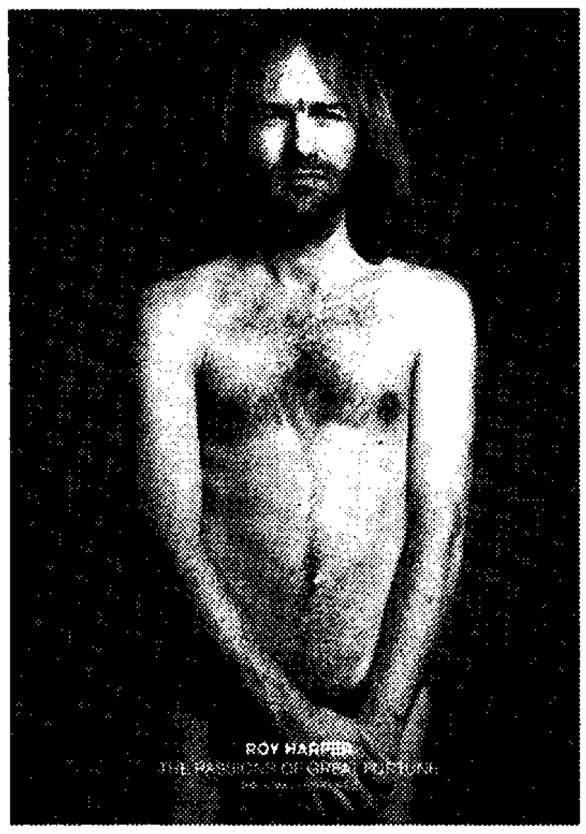

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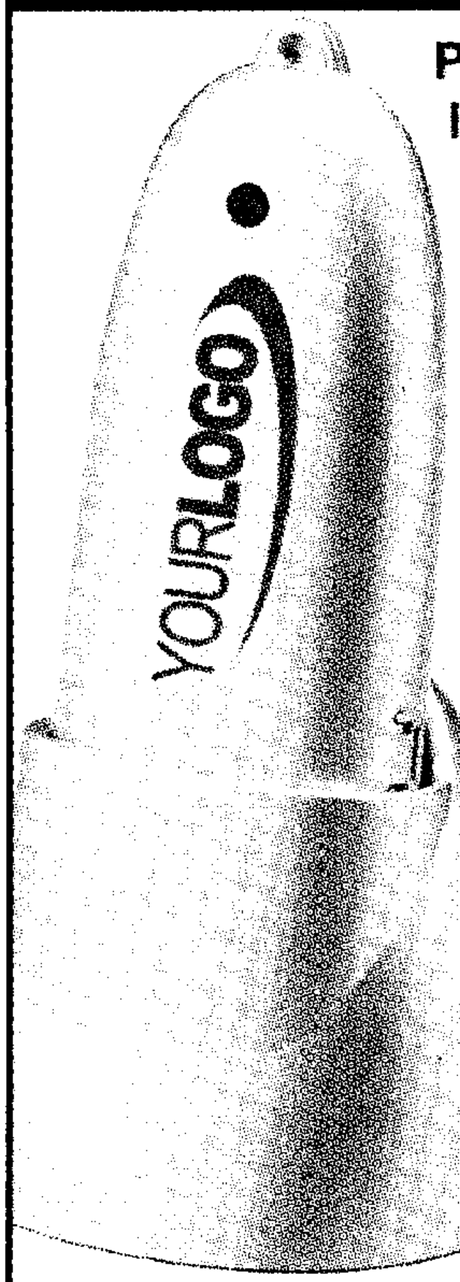

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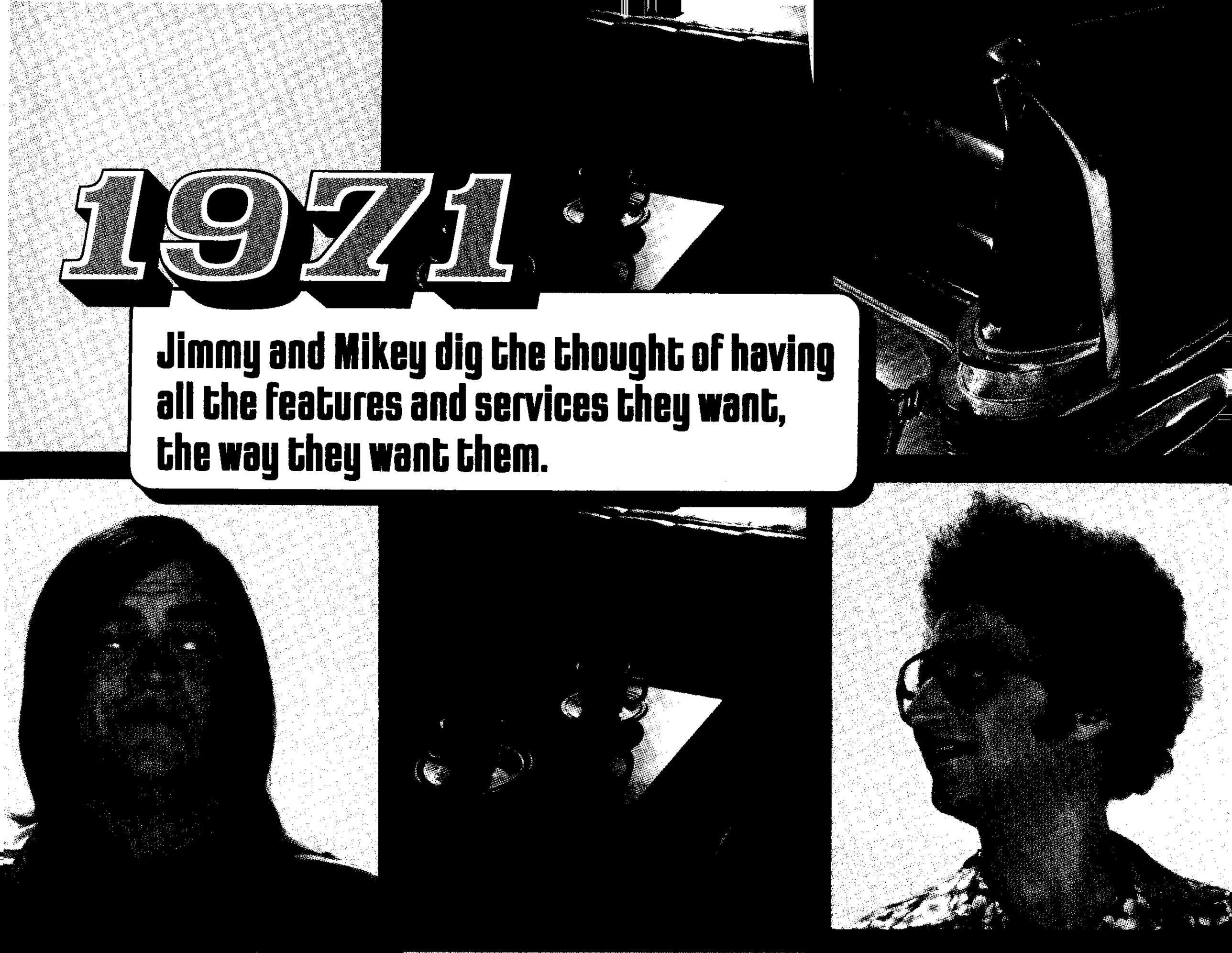
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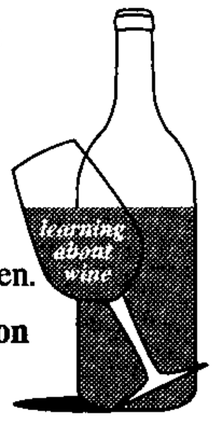

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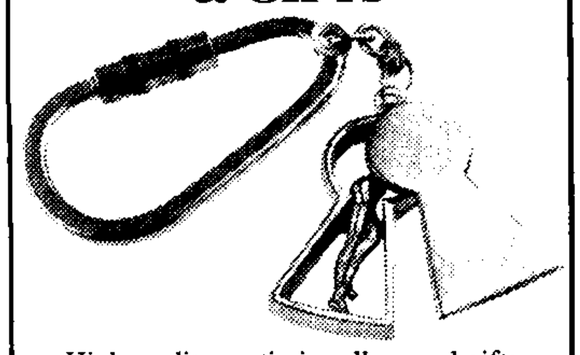

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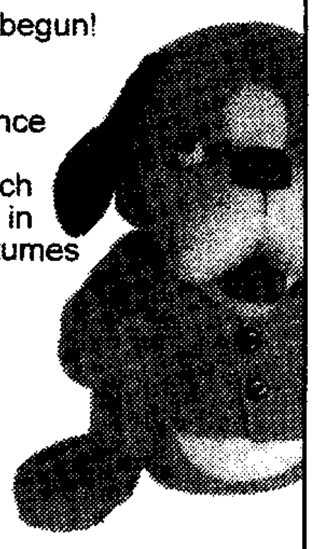

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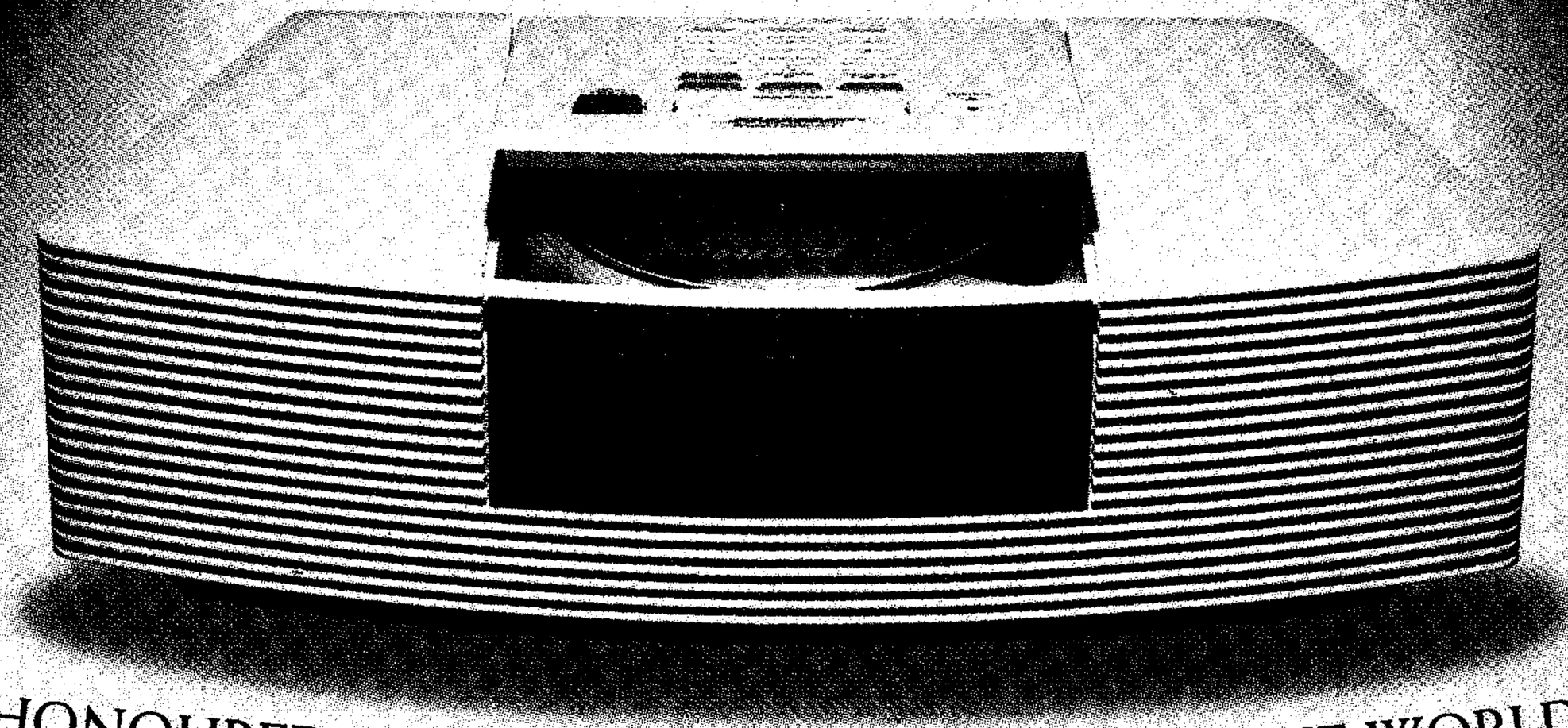

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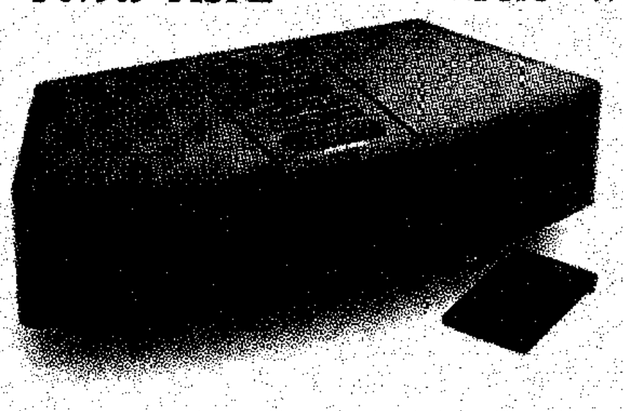
Forbes ASAP magazine rates the **Bose® Wave® radio** right up there with the light bulb, the compact disc and the telephone. Only fifteen inventions made their exclusive "All-Time A-List" of technology breakthroughs that have changed the world, and the Bose Wave® radio is one of them.

Recognising products "both functional and beautiful," *Forbes ASAP* credits Bose with managing to fit "really big sound into a really small – and pretty – package."



LIFELIKE SOUND

The secret is Bose acoustic wave-guide speaker technology, which is built into both the Wave® radio and Wave® radio/CD (shown above). This and other US patented Bose technologies deliver rich, full sound with remarkable clarity and deep, natural lows. It's sound you would never expect from a system that fits so neatly on a tabletop or kitchen worktop.

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The real test of a soft-top isn't summer. It's winter. And with a triple-layered roof, a sophisticated climate control system and a choice of turbocharged engines, the new Saab 9-3 Convertible is the ultimate all-weather car. Not one that slumbers in your garage all winter. To find your nearest dealer call 0845 300 93 95 or visit www.saab.co.uk

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OFFICIAL FUEL CONSUMPTION IN MPG (LITRES/100KM): URBAN 24.1 (11.7), EXTRA URBAN 42.2 (6.7), COMBINED 32.8 (8.6). CO_2 EMISSIONS 206 G/KM. ALL FIGURES FOR SAAB 9-3 VECTOR 1.8t SPORT CONVERTIBLE FITTED WITH MANUAL GEARBOX. Model shown: 9-3 Vector 1.8t Sport Convertible, £25,895 on the road. Price excludes upgraded alloy wheels and CargoWing accessory (available Spring 2004).

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